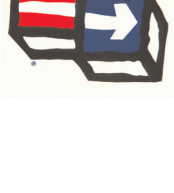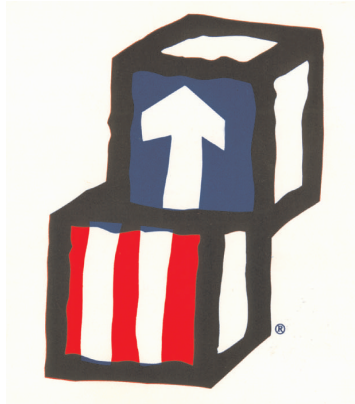# Self-Assessment Toolkit

for Head Start *and* Early Head Start Programs

Administration for Children and Families

May 2002

Administration for Children and Families
Region I - New England

Self-Assessment Toolkit
for Head Start *and*
Early Head Start Programs

To Assure Quality Services for Head Start
Children and Families

For Additional Copies

The *Self-Assessment Toolkit for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs* is available in electronic format on two websites:

ACF Region I:

www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/region1/hsh.htm

New England Resource Center:

www.edc.org/CCF/hstta/nerc/resources.htm

You may download and print extra copies of the entire toolkit or particular sections. The files are in standard Microsoft Word '97 format which can be adapted and .pdf format which can not be altered but provides a quality printed copy.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

What is a self-assessment and why should we do it?

Self-assessment is a process by which Head Start programs can annually review their own management systems and program operations in order to assure that quality services are delivered to children and families each year.

Head Start Performance Standards clearly state that at least once each program year, with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members, grantee and delegate agencies must conduct a self-assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal regulations.* The objectives of Head Start and Early Head Start are clear:

- Enhance children's growth and development.

- Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children.

- Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services.

- Link children and families to needed community services.

- Ensure well-managed programs that involve parents in decision-making.**

How can Head Start programs be sure that the services provided meet these objectives on a daily basis and strive to continuously improve the quality of services?

By using this *Self-Assessment Toolkit for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs,* grantees can annually assess how specific aspects of the program's operations impact services delivered to children and families. Self-assessment is not an isolated event, but along with ongoing monitoring, is an integral part of a program's planning cycle. Programs seeking continuous improvement should constantly ask the questions:

- Are our services responding effectively to the changing needs of children and families?

- Are we doing what we need to, or are we just doing it the way we have always done it?

- Can we refine our program design and management systems to further improve services to children and families?

*45 CFR 1304.51(i)(1)
**ACYF-IM-HS-00-03, Initial Guidance on New Legislative Provisions on Performance Standards, Performance Measures, Program Self-Assessment and Program Monitoring, issued 1/31/2000

Who is responsible for the self-assessment?

Section 1304.50, Appendix A (Governance and Management Responsibilities), designates the Head Start Program Director as having operational responsibility for carrying out the self-assessment. Most Head Start Directors engage a team of program managers and leaders in outlining a process and timeline for conducting the self-assessment and analyzing the results. The results of the self-assessment serve as a driving force in determining needs for program improvement. The self-assessment portion of the Governance and Management Responsibilities chart is provided below:

Grantee Agency		Delegate Agency		Grantee or Delegate Management Staff	
Governing Body has general responsibility	Policy Council must approve or disapprove	Governing Body has general responsibility	Policy Committee must approve or disapprove	Head Start program director has operating responsibility	Agency director's responsibility is determined locally

How does a self-assessment differ from the Federal monitoring we get every three years? What are the particular purposes of Federal monitoring and self-assessment?

The primary purpose of **Federal monitoring** is contained in Section 641A of the Head Start Act:

> In order to determine whether Head Start agencies meet standards established . . . and results-based educational performance measures developed by the Secretary. . . with respect to program, administrative, financial management, and other requirements. . .

The primary purpose of **Self-assessment** is explained in section 1304.51(i)(1) of the Head Start Performance Standards as a method of measuring agency accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses. Self-assessment allows for the continuous improvement of program plans and service delivery methods, for the enhancement of program quality and timely responses to issues that arise in the community, the program, and among enrolled families. The self-assessment process also provides an opportunity for involving parents and community stakeholders, and for making staff more aware of the how the program operates and is viewed by its consumers.

The processes of self-assessment and Federal monitoring compliment each other and both are intended to ensure quality. Below is table comparing features of the two forms of review.

Review Process	Frequency/ Schedule	Responsible Entity	Instrument	Perspective	How Findings are Used
Self-Assessment	Annually	Head Start Grantee	Flexible/Self-Assessment Guide	Self-critical	Shared with Managers, staff and governing bodies
Federal Monitoring	Every 3 years	Federal Regional Office	Standardized/Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring of Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees (PRISM)	Outside Experts	Submitted to Regional Administrator and Grantee w/ Corrective Action requirement

Although these two forms of review and quality assurance are similar, self-assessment is the annual opportunity for programs to obtain honest, objective feedback about their ability to meet Federal regulations and the quality of their services.

How long should a self-assessment take?

The time required to perform a self-assessment will vary with each program.

While many programs have thought that the self-assessment is extra work, well-managed Head Start programs view the time and effort needed to complete the annual self-assessment as an important, integral part of the program year. The self-assessment process should allow for the continuation of Head Start services without interruption, yet provide the self-assessment team with time set aside for access and answering questions.

How will this guide be useful?

This guide is intended to be a workbook that will help you:

- Review your program's operations

- Review your program's management systems

- Review your program's progress in meeting its own goals and objectives

- Identify program strengths

- Identify areas where improvement is needed

- Assess your program's progress in achieving locally determined goals and objectives.

- Analyze the results of the self-assessment

- Design a plan for continuous program improvement

About this Toolkit

One of the key management responsibilities of all Head Start programs is to *"conduct a self-assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals and objectives and in implementing Federal regulations at least once each program year."* (1304.51(I)) <u>As of the year 2000, programs are also required to incorporate child outcome data into their self-assessment process.</u>

Each Head Start program is required to develop a comprehensive process for self-assessment that addresses all of the management systems and service areas that are part of every well-run Head Start program. Historically, many programs have used the existing Federal monitoring instrument as a basis for creating their own system, because it is specifically designed to address all of the Federal requirements that Head Start programs must meet.

We recognize that many programs struggle to refine their system for self-assessment. They strive to create a system that provides an in-depth assessment of all Head Start service areas and management systems, yet remains user-friendly and manageable for staff, parents and other participants who may serve on self-assessment teams.

We have developed the Head Start Self-Assessment Toolkit to assist programs in the design of their system. In designing the toolkit, we have relied on the current Federal monitoring instrument known as PRISM, the Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring of Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees, to guide the development of this instrument.

Guiding Principles

Based on guidance and feedback we received from Head Start directors and program managers and the experience of Head Start Regional Office staff, technical assistance providers and program review team members, we have developed a Self-Assessment Toolkit with the following in mind:

Local programs will benefit from a self-assessment instrument that:

- adequately addresses all areas of the Head Start performance standards

- can be administered by a diverse volunteer self-assessment team that includes not only child development and family services professionals, but also governing body members, parents and other community representatives
- promotes an efficient use of time and resources
- provides valuable information to inform program leaders about ways to strengthen and improve the program

Four Stages of Self-Assessment

There are four stages in the self-assessment process.

The **first stage** is *Preparing*.

Programs must take steps to prepare for self-assessment by formulating a team to lead the process, determining how they will use the toolkit, informing the Policy Council, selecting and recruiting qualified participants to serve on the various self-assessment teams, and informing others that the assessment will take place.

The **second stage** is *Engaging*

Once the program has identified their self-assessment teams and recruited their members, team leaders engage their team in the actual assessment process. Team members receive training on the regulations as well as the process they will use to complete the self-assessment booklets assigned to their team. Team members observe activities, review documents, interview people, and record and summarize their findings in the booklets.

The **third stage** is *Analyzing.*

Once the self-assessment teams have completed their assignments and summarized the results, their work is then forwarded to the self-assessment leadership team. Together the members reflect on the summaries, analyze the information, and draw conclusions that outline the goals that will lead to a stronger program. Programs should not hesitate to ask for clarifications on regulations or policy from Federal staff, if needed.

The **fourth stage** is *Strengthening*

In the final stage, leaders use self-assessment results as a driving force to develop goals, objectives and action plans for their program. The self-assessment has little value unless the program uses the information to improve program design and quality. Both the results of the self-assessment and the plan for improvement should be communicated widely – to the board of directors, staff, Policy Council, parents and community partners. Both the Regional Office staff and technical assistance staff from the New England Resource Center and New England RAP at EDC can provide assistance and support to Head Start programs as they develop and implement program improvement plans.

On the following page you will find a graphic depiction of the self-assessment process that is envisioned by this toolkit. Be advised that the number of teams will vary with each program's local adaptation of this toolkit.

Toolkit Format

This toolkit is divided into four sections representing the stages of the self-assessment process:

> ***Stage 1***: *Preparing*
> ***Stage 2***: *Engaging*
> ***Stage 3***: *Analyzing*
> ***Stage 4***: *Strengthening*

On the first page of each toolkit stage you will find an overview. The overview identifies key participants and describes the activity of the stage.

The largest of the four sections is section 2, *Engaging,* which contains 18 booklets. Each booklet corresponds to a core question in the PRISM and addresses a critical Head Start management system or service area. We have added one additional booklet on Outcome Measurement that addresses the new Federal mandate that programs integrate outcome measurement into their program self-assessment process.

Each booklet opens with a core question describing the system or service area to be assessed. Next is a list of related performance standards and a list of key features that capture the essence of each section. Assessment team members are instructed to pay close attention to these key features which constitute the critical elements of each section. Team members are encouraged to review all related standards and to refer to them repeatedly during the assessment process.

Team members are instructed to engage in one or more of the following data collection methods to gather information to complete their booklet:

> (1) *Observation* (e.g., observing classrooms, Policy Council meetings)
> (2) *Review* (e.g., reviewing written plans, documents, records)
> (3) *Interview* (e.g., interviewing managers, direct service staff, parents)

Booklets are filled with charts, checklists, sample interview questions, and observation tools. Space is provided for note taking. Team members summarize their findings by completing the last page of each booklet.

FOUR STAGES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Preparing

The self-assessment leadership team, a team of managers and program leaders, work together to design the self-assessment process. The team is led by the Head Start director.

Self-Assessment Leadership Team
Head Start Director with representatives from **program management**, **governing body**, **policy groups**, and **community partnerships**.

Stage 2: Engaging

Team leaders recruit staff, parents, and community volunteers to serve on their individual assessment teams. Each team is responsible for completing their assigned self-assessment booklets.

TEAM 1
Staff,
Parents,
Community
volunteers

TEAM 2
Staff,
Parents,
Community
volunteers

TEAM 3
Staff,
Parents,
Community
volunteers

TEAM 4
Staff,
Parents,
Community
volunteers
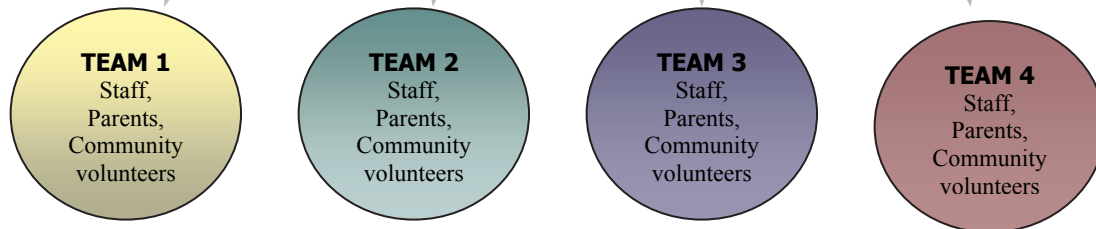
Stage 3: Analyzing

The self-assessment leadership team reconvenes to review the summary reports prepared during Stage 2 and analyze the findings. They identify goals for program improvement and share the self-assessment results with key stakeholders.

Self-Assessment Leadership Team
Head Start Director with representatives from **program management**, **governing body, policy groups**, and **community partnerships**

Stage 4: Strengthening

In this final stage, members of the self-assessment leadership team design and implement plans for program improvement. They also establish a time frame for evaluating progress.

Self-Assessment Leadership Team
Head Start Director with representatives from **program management**, **governing body, policy groups**, and **community partnerships**

Stage 1: Preparing for Your Self-Assessment

Introduce the Self-Assessment Toolkit to Self-Assessment Leaders

One of the first responsibilities of the Head Start director is to provide self-assessment leaders with an understanding and appreciation of the role that self-assessment plays in maintaining program quality and fostering change and continuous improvement. The director, who by Head Start regulation has operating responsibility for the self-assessment process, may choose to facilitate the self-assessment leader group or designate that responsibility to one of its members.

When recruiting members to join the self-assessment leadership team, directors need to consider the role of delegates and child care partners on that team. As stated in 1304.51(i)(1), the self-assessment is conducted "…with the consultation and participation of the policy groups and, as appropriate, other community members." Directors may want to consider recruiting these partners to the table.

The group leader should then share the Head Start Self-Assessment Toolkit with the membership. Team members should all become familiar with the entire toolkit, including the instructions, booklets, and data collection instruments. They should discuss why the self-assessment is being conducted, who should be involved as team leaders, team members, and whose cooperation is needed in order for it to be successful.

Determine How the Self-Assessment Process will Look in Your Program

Managing the Responsibility

A quality self-assessment takes considerable time and effort. The process of assessing all program services and systems may be more manageable if you divide the responsibilities among various teams, designating program managers and other key decision makers as team leaders. Creating teams will have several advantages:

- the work will be spread among a larger group of individuals to lessen the burden and add depth, knowledge and valuable perspectives of many individuals to the experience
- staff, parents, Policy Council members, participants, community partners and others serving on self-assessment teams will have greater access to team leaders who can provide support and guidance throughout the process
- individual teams can focus on particular areas or systems to review that are more appropriate to their experience
- by recruiting managers and staff representing delegates and/or child care partners you are fully investing delegates and partners in the self-assessment process. They will gain a fuller understanding of the Head Start performance standards and their importance to a quality program.

Programs can determine team assignments by dividing the 18 booklets in three, four, or five groups. Factors influencing your decision on the number and composition of each group might be:

- your program's organizational structure and the manner in which responsibilities are assigned to management staff
- the size of your program
- the time it will take to adequately complete each booklet

Two examples of how teams can be divided are:

Example A	
TEAM 1: Management Systems	
▪ Program Governance	▪ Planning
▪ Communication	▪ Record-Keeping & Reporting
▪ Ongoing Monitoring	▪ Human Resources
▪ Fiscal Management	▪ Child Outcomes
TEAM 2: Child Development and Health Services	
▪ Prevention & Early Intervention	
▪ Disabilities Services	▪ Individualization
▪ Tracking and Follow-up	▪ Curriculum
TEAM 3: Family and Community Partnerships:	
▪ Family Partnership Building	
▪ Community and Child Care Partnerships	▪ Parent Involvement
TEAM 4: Program Design	
▪ Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA)	▪ Facilities, Materials, and Equipment
Example B	
TEAM 1: Management	
▪ Community and Child Care Partnerships	▪ Planning
▪ Communication	▪ Record-Keeping & Reporting
▪ On-going Monitoring	▪ Human Resources
▪ Fiscal Management	▪ Facilities, equipment, and material
TEAM 2: Education and Disabilities	
▪ Individualization	▪ Curriculum
▪ Disabilities Services	▪ Outcome Measurement
TEAM 3: Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health	
▪ Prevention and Early Intervention	▪ Tracking and Follow-up
TEAM 4: Family Partnerships and ERSEA	
▪ Family Partnership Building	▪ Parent Involvement,
▪ Governance	▪ Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA)

Use the following worksheet to record your decisions about how the self-assessment responsibilities should be divided. List the appropriate booklets as specific items under each team.

TEAM 1:	
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
TEAM 2:	
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
TEAM 3:	
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
TEAM 4:	
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪

Selecting Team Leaders

Persons who serve as leaders for each self-assessment team should have experience and expertise in the service or management areas to which they are assigned. Team leaders are responsible for:
- recruiting a diverse group of team members to engage in the assessment process
- training members of the self-assessment team on the content of the regulations and process they will use to assess the program
- describing the program structure and layout to members, pointing out key locations they will visit, and introducing them to members of the staff and Head Start community who they may need to speak with
- assisting team members in distributing the work load, assigning tasks that correspond to the skills and abilities of members, and pairing team members, as appropriate
- establishing a time frame for completing the assignments
- arranging to check in with members at certain intervals to assess their progress and assist with any problems that arise
- providing on-going support to team members

- assisting members in summarizing the data and information they have collected and drawing conclusions
- compiling summaries into a usable report that can be shared with program leaders
- recognizing team members for their contribution to the program

Use the following worksheet to help you make decisions about what kinds of skills your team leaders should have and who would be the best match:

Title	Skills/Perspectives	Team Leader (name, position)
Team 1:		
Team 2:		
Team 3:		
Team 4:		

Recruiting Participants to Serve on your Self-assessment Teams

Although the self-assessment process will be heavily supported by program staff, it provides a wonderful opportunity to involve others. As stated in the guidance attached to Regulation 1304.51 (I)1, program self-assessment and monitoring, *"consider including staff, policy group members, parents, representatives from community organizations, governing body members, and staff from other Head Start agencies on the self-assessment team."* To the extent possible, it is desirable to recruit a team that is representative of the diversity of enrolled children, families and the local community. Serving on a self-assessment team provides parents with an opportunity to learn important new skills that can be applied to their goals for personal or professional development. Including individuals from outside your program can offer a tremendous learning

opportunity for both parties. You may want to contact peers from nearby Head Start programs and offer to assist with their assessment if they will assist with yours. Consider inviting early childhood development programs in the local area that would be willing to lend a hand. Affirmatively recruit team members who have the right skills and will contribute to the team. When recruiting, be sure your candidates have the time to engage in the process.

In selecting potential team members, take into consideration the different skills and qualities that the task requires. In addition to having an interest or expertise relating to Head Start services or systems, participants serving on the assessment team should have the following skills and qualities:

- Objectivity
- Professional conduct
- Appreciation for confidentiality
- One or more of the following:
  Observation skills
  Interview skills
  Reading and documentation skills

Use the following worksheet to record your ideas for participants and volunteers who will serve on your self-assessment teams. List the positions, titles, or names (e.g., parent, board member, Education Content Manager, Mary Jones, etc.) as bulleted items under each team.

Team 1 ~ Title:		
Position, title or names:		
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

Team 2 ~ Title:		
Position, title or names:		
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

Team 3 ~ Title:		
Position, title or names:		
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

Team 4 ~ Title:		
Position, title or names:		
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

Training Self-Assessment Teams

Team leaders (who are in many cases program managers) should give careful thought to the training that they provide to team members so their team will be fully prepared to engage in the assessment process. The quality of the initial training and orientation as well as on-going support has a direct effect on the quality and usefulness of the results. Key elements of the training should include:

- discussion of the purpose of self-assessment and how the results are an integral part of the planning process
- overview of the program's organizational structure and description of program services and options
- distribution of Head Start regulations and booklets relating to team assignments (duplicate the booklets, as needed, to provide everyone a copy).
- overview of regulations and discussion of their intent
- review of the booklets and the three methods of collecting information: review, observe, and interview
- distribution of written plans describing services in each of the content areas to teams, according to their assignments
- discussion of the qualities that make for a good team member (e.g. they are objective, honest, respectful of staff) review of professional conduct expected of the team
- sharing of the skills, expertise, and qualities of each member of the team

Use the worksheet on the next page to assist in designing a training session(s) for your self-assessment teams. Keep in mind that you may choose to conduct joint training (see second worksheet) for all self-assessment team participants or more detailed training for individual teams – or a combination of both.

	Individual Team Training Content	**Trainer (if other than team leader)**
Team 1~Title:		
Team 2~Title:		
Team 3~Title:		
Team 4~Title:		

Joint Team Training Content	**Trainer (if other than team leader)**

Building Stage 3 Analysis Skills

In Stage 3, the self-assessment leadership team reconvenes to analyze the results of the self-assessment. As explained further in Stage 3, you may want to provide some training to augment the analysis skills of the leadership team. Resources for this type of training include *Head Start Moving Ahead: Competency-Based Training Program, Module 7-A: Improving Program Quality through Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment* which is available on the Head Start publications website.

Selecting Locations to Visit

Some programs have many children and families enrolled and operate classrooms in more than one location. Your self-assessment leadership team may determine that including every classroom in the self-assessment process will be too time consuming. Decide if the assessment team will visit all centers and areas or a representative sample. For grantees with delegate agencies, decide if the review team will visit all delegates or a sample or if the delegates will engage in an independent assessment process. A sample should be chosen which represents a cross-section of children, families and program options and services. Make sure childcare partnership centers are included. Your sample should be large enough to establish whether quality is consistent throughout the program.

Use the worksheet below to record which locations the self-assessment team(s) should visit:

Delegate Agency	
Centers	
Classrooms	
Child Care Partners	
Family Child Care, etc.	

Establishing a Timeline

Develop a timeline for teams to begin and end the process. Some programs may wish to conduct self-assessment in phases over the course of a year. Some may choose to focus their efforts so that the self-assessment takes place in one or two weeks. Since self-assessment is an integral part of program planning, be sure to coordinate your self-assessment with your planning calendar. It is important that you adapt the process to best meet the needs of your particular program.

Think about scheduling your own self-assessment at a time during the program year when:

- the Policy Council has enough experience to be full participants in the process
- services are well underway
- time remains before the end of the program year to correct any issues that arise, to maximize outcomes for children and families currently participating in the program

Many programs prefer to stagger their assessment schedule so that the assessment of program services precedes the assessment of management systems. Experienced directors feel that the teams assigned to assess Head Start management systems can benefit from the information gathered during the assessment of program services. With this information in hand, they are better able to draw conclusions about the relationship between systems and services and can determine how systems may be positively or adversely affecting services to children and families. Staggering the assessment schedule in this way also allows participants to serve on more than one assessment team so they can share information on program services and promote discussions around the link between services and systems.

Below is a week-at-a-glance chart showing how the self-assessment process might look in a program that chooses to complete the process within one week.

Week-At-A-Glance				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Self-Assessment Teams receive orientation and training	• Team conducts self-assessment	• Team conducts self-assessment • Team Leaders check in with team's progress	• Team conducts self-assessment	• Team summarizes results

Use the worksheet on the following page to set target dates for steps in the self-assessment process:

Activity	Date
Select self-assessment leadership team	
Design self-assessment process (Stage 1)	
Present process to Policy Council for approval	
Recruit team participants	
Teams meet for orientation and training	
Service area teams engaged in completing booklets (Stage 2)	
Management system teams engaged in completing booklets (Stage 2)	
Summary sheets completed for each team and presented to team leader	
Reconvene self-assessment leadership team to review and analyze results (Stage 3)	
Results shared with staff	
Results shared with Policy Council	
Design program improvement plan (Stage 4)	
Evaluate effectiveness of plan in improving systems and services	

Gaining Approval of Policy Council

Section 1304.51(i)(1) of the Head Start performance standards requires the consultation and participation of the Policy Council in the self-assessment process. Section 1304.50(d)(1)(viii) provides the following guidance:

As active participants in the ongoing process of annual self-assessment . . . the Policy Council and Policy Committee consider the extent to which:

- *The time schedule for self-assessment is reasonable;*
- *An appropriate assessment team has been formed, which includes parents and adequate representation from the community;*
- *The self-assessment team receives training on how to conduct an assessment;*

- *All team members are fully aware of the results of the last self-assessment, as well as of the Federal monitoring review;*
- *The measures used to conduct the self-assessment adequately evaluate the program;*
- *Findings from the self-assessment are reported to the Policy Council, Policy Committee, Parent Committees and governing bodies; and*
- *Improvement plans are appropriate and feasible in terms of resources and timeframes.*

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶

Management Systems: Program Governance

Core Question to be answered by self-assessment team:

How effective is your system of shared governance in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that programs have a policy group and governing body that share responsibility for overseeing the delivery of high quality services to children and families. Parents and community representatives should be empowered to actively participate in the shared decision-making process. (Introduction to 1304.50, p. 158)

This booklet will help the self-assessment team determine if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to Program Governance. Related performance standards include: 1304.50 (a)(1), (a)(2), (a)(3), (a)(4), (a)(5), 1304.50 (b)(1)-(b)(7), 1304.50 (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), and Appendix A.

As you conduct your self-assessment of program governance systems, pay close attention to the following:

- Does the Board provide leadership and direction to the program?
- Is the Policy Council actively involved in informed decision making?
- Do the Board, the Policy Council and the staff have a formal structure of shared decision-making which guarantees the delivery of high quality services to children and families?
- Are the Board and Policy Council appropriately involved in budget decision-making?

Observe:

If possible, the self-assessment team member(s) should sit in and observe a meeting of the Policy Council and interview one or two members of the governing board.

Review:

In advance of the Policy Council meeting, ask the Head Start director and/or Parent Involvement manager to provide you with access to the following documents:

- Written policies or procedures that describe how the program governance works
- By-laws
- Meeting minutes from the Policy Council, Policy Committee or Parent Committee and
- Evidence of training

Use the checklist below to assist you in your document review:

Is there any documentation of Policy Council and Board training that may have occurred re: how the program is governed; (e.g. memos, invitations, sign-up sheets, training materials). Has the training been provided to parents, community representatives, community partners, Board members and staff?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Many programs have exceeded Head Start Performance Standards by improving communication between the governing body and the Policy Council by having at least one member of the governing body serve on the Policy Council and one member of the Policy Council serve on the governing body. Does your program include this cross-membership in its structure? (check membership lists)

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Is there a document that shows that parent members of the Policy Council or Policy Committee are elected once a year?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are all parents encouraged and given an opportunity to participate and serve as Policy Council members?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are any parent members of the Policy Council or Policy Committee serving for more than three years? (Check old meeting minutes, membership lists; ask PC members and staff)?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Is there a handbook or letter that explains Head Start parents' rights and responsibilities?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are there written procedures to help resolve community complaints about the program, approved by the Board and Policy Council?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are there written procedures to resolve disputes between the governing body and Policy Council?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are there community representatives on the Policy Council?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment: _____

Are they elected?   ❏ Yes ❏ No   How many years do they serve?   _____

Comment: _____

Interview:

A self-assessment team member should speak with at least two members of the governing body and Policy Council. Questions to ask might include:

Describe the ways in which the Policy Council receives information on how the program is progressing in order to make decisions that will be of benefit to the program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What specific kinds of documents and reports do you receive to help inform you about the Head Start/Early Head Start program? (Listen for information about financial reports and child outcome data.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tell me the steps that are taken in order to prepare for the application of funds through the grant process. How much opportunity does the Policy Council have to become fully involved prior to the grant's submission?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe the annual self-assessment process. Who is involved in evaluating the program? How are the results reported to the Board and the Policy Council? How are the results used to make improvements in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Can you provide examples of how child outcome data has been used to plan for changes in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the Policy Council participate in the hiring and/or firing process?

_____

_____

_____

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Describe the ways parents are involved at the center committee level. How regularly do they meet? How are parents supported financially to carry out their activities (i.e., reimbursements)? Are all parents encouraged to participate?

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How does the program recruit volunteers in the community?

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Ask Policy Council and Board members if the Policy Council and/or Policy Committee develop, review, approve/disapprove program policies and procedures? How do they accomplish this?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Governance:

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❷

Management Systems: Planning

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How effective is the grantee's ongoing system of program planning in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose Statement:

Planning is a multi-faceted, dynamic, and ongoing activity that involves key members of the Head Start community. Agencies that plan well are better equipped to meet the unexpected and create a vision for the future.

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to planning, which includes such activities as developing the community assessment, formulating program goals and objectives, selection of program options, and development of written plans for implementing services. Related performance standards include: 1304.51(a); 1305.3; 1306.30(a); 1306.30(d); 1306.31-1306.36; 1308.4

As you conduct your assessment of the program's planning process, pay close attention to:

- How the community assessment is used for program planning;
- How the program consults with the governing body, policy groups, staff and other community organizations in the process;
- How the program develops and revisits long-range goals and short term program and financial objectives;
- How the conclusions drawn from the community assessment impact program plans;
- How the results of the self-assessment impact plans for program improvement; and
- How the program's analysis of outcomes for children impact their planning process.

Review:

Spend some time reviewing the following documents:

- The community assessment
- Statement of long-range goals and short-term objectives
- Service plans for each program area (Early Childhood Development and Health Services, Family and Community Partnerships, and Program Design and Management)
- Timelines depicting the yearly planning calendar
- The results of the most recent self-assessment

Use the checklist below to assist your document review:

Has the community assessment been completed within the last three years?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence of a yearly update?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Is the date on the document within the last three years?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Does the community assessment include some description of the community's strengths, needs, and resources?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Is there a strategic plan or other document that includes the program's long term goals and short-term objectives?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Has this document been updated within the last year?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do long-range goals and short-term objectives logically follow from the community assessment?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Are they consistent with the philosophy of Head Start?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Is information from on-going monitoring and self-assessments feeding into planning activities?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should gather information about planning by interviewing:

- Head Start Director and program planner
- Members of the governing body and Policy Council

Questions to ask:

What process is used to develop the community assessment, and how do you utilize the results? (i.e., Is the community assessment used for making plans, determining program options, and deciding how and where services will be delivered?)

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What were some of the key findings from last year's self-assessment?

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How did these findings impact your program improvement plans?

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Can you describe how your analysis of child outcome data has impacted program improvement planning?

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How would you describe your program planning process? Who is involved? What data sources and information do you use to determine what your goals and objectives should be?

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How are the governing body, policy groups, staff, and other community organizations consulted while plans are being made?

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What process do you use to develop written plans? How are the plans utilized once they are written? (i.e., Do plans "sit on the shelf" or are they dynamic documents that are constantly referred to, reviewed, revised and updated as needed?)

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What progress has your program made in achieving the goals and objectives contained in your strategic plan? What challenges have you faced? Have you revised any of your initial goals?

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Answer if applicable to your program: If your community assessment indicates needs such as full day/full year or Early Head Start for children from birth to three, how does this influence the planning process?

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In planning for parent involvement, does your program collect information about fathers in addition to mothers at the time of enrollment? (i.e., do your intake forms prompt staff to collect this information?)

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Does your community assessment process include identifying supportive services in the community for youth? Does your community assessment process include identifying marriage strengthening or marriage preparation services for couples who choose to participate?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Planning

Areas where your program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where your program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❸

Management Systems: Communication

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How effective is the grantee's communication system in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose Statement:

Communication ensures the exchange of information that allows individuals to become fully involved in program activities and to make group decisions that promote a quality program. (Rationale for 1304.51(b), p.181)

This booklet will help you to assess if the program is meeting Federal performance standards relating to communications involving governing bodies, parents, policy groups, staff, partners in the community, and the community in general Related performance standards include: 1304.22(a)(4); 1304.20(c)(1); 1304.22(b)(3); 1304.41(a)(1); 1304.51(b)-1304.51(f); 1308.4(I)

As you conduct your assessment of this program's communication system, pay close attention to how information is shared:

- Among staff, governing bodies, and policy groups;
- Between staff and parents;
- With community partners and child care partners; and
- With delegate agency governing bodies, Policy Committees, and staff (where appropriate)
- With the public and news media.

Review:

Review documents such as:

- Policies and procedures pertaining to communication systems
- Written communication among staff
- Meeting minutes

- Sample communications with families
- Policies and procedures pertaining to communication
- Communications with the governing body and policy groups
- Sample communications with community partners

Use the checklist below to assist your document review:

Does the program have written policies and procedures pertaining to communication systems?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Are communications with families provided in their primary language?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Is an orientation packet provided to new members of governing bodies and policy groups which explains their role and participation in shared decision-making?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Does the program have a way to communicate with staff such as memos, bulletins or electronic means such as e-mail or bulletin boards?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Does the program have a regular schedule of meetings:

For staff?	❏ Yes	❏ No
For parents?	❏ Yes	❏ No
For Policy Groups?	❏ Yes	❏ No

Do governing board members and policy groups receive pertinent information in a timely manner to make informed decisions?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Interview:

The self-assessment team member(s) may want to interview members of the Head Start management team, staff, members of the governing body or Policy Council, and Head Start families.

Questions to ask staff:

How do you find out about what's happening in the program?

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_____

What opportunities do you have on a regular basis to communicate with other staff, including supervisors?

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How do you foster effective two-way communication with parents?

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Are you able to communicate with families in their primary or preferred language?

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How does the program obtain information from each family to plan services for their child?

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Questions for policy group members:

How are you oriented to your roles and responsibilities as a policy group member?

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Is required information such as reports, HHS policies, guidelines, program plans, policies and procedures and grant applications, shared with you? Is information received in a timely manner?

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Questions for Managers:

Is there a system in place for staff to communicate regularly about services to children and families so that services to children and families become integrated and coordinated? Describe the system.

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In what ways does the program seek information from families to plan opportunities within the program that meet their needs and desires?

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How is good communication ensured between the program and its community partners?

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Describe the system for orienting new employees.

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What is the process for parent orientation to your program and services?

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Questions for Families:

How do you find out about what's happening in the program?

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Did you participate in an orientation to the program? Tell me about that experience.

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Communication

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Areas of Additional Concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❹

Management Systems: Record-Keeping and Reporting

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How efficient and effective are the record-keeping and reporting systems in providing accurate, confidential, and timely information regarding children, families, and staff and in supporting quality services?

Purpose Statement:

Effective record-keeping and reporting systems provide the information needed to individualize programs for children and families, to monitor the quality of program services, to assist in program planning and management, and to ensure the delivery of quality services. (Rationale for 1304.51(g), p. 184)

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to maintaining publicly accessible records, records on refusals of health services, records relating the dispensing of medication, etc. Performance standards: 1301.30: 1304.20(e)(5); 1304.22(c)(3)-1304.22(c)(5); 1304.51(g)-1304.51(h); 1304.52(k)(3)(i); 1308.4(i); 1308.4(l); 1308.6(e)(4)

> Note: At least one staff person should sit on this review team so they can access and review child/family files. Other team members may not have access to these files based on the program's confidentiality policy.

As you conduct your assessment of the program's record–keeping and reporting systems, pay close attention to:

- The way that child/family files are maintained and the contents of each file; and

- The reports that are used by program managers to maintain program accountability and keep them advised of the program's progress in delivering services to children and families.

- The reports that are generated on child outcomes for children three to five years old that provide information on progress on the required domains, elements, and indicators when they enter the program, at a mid-point in the year, and at the end of the year.

Review:

Ask your team leader to provide you access to the following:

- Program policies and procedures pertaining to confidentiality;

- A sample number of child/family records that you will use to complete the attached *file audit* instrument. (In order to comply with policies pertaining to the confidentiality of records, these files should be reviewed by **staff** participating on the assessment team)

  Choose a sample number that is large enough to determine if the program's record-keeping system complies with Head Start regulations. We recommend you review a sample number of files from each center. Be sure to include files representing children with disabilities.

- In addition to the sample number of files, parents serving on this team may choose to review their own child and family file and compare the format and contents with Head Start regulations pertaining to record-keeping (Note that some programs may use the term "sample file" to apply to a model file which serves as an example of what items should be placed in a file and in what sequence. Here, we refer to "sample" in its statistical sense).

- A selection of reports used by supervisors and managers to determine the status of program operations and services (e.g., monthly monitoring reports, weekly activity reports, computerized tracking reports, and child outcome reports).

- The program's most recent Program Information Report (PIR).

File Audit (Child/Family Files):

Use the attached File Audit Instrument to review child and family files. After completing your audit, make comments below that summarize strengths and identify any patterns that emerge that point to weaknesses in the system.

Summary comments:

_____

_____

_____

Interview and questionnaire:

Ask your team leader to identify who within the organization is in charge of maintaining child/family records. Interview that individual and ask the following:

Describe the system you use to maintain records for children and families.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who has access to child/family records?

_____

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_____

Describe the safeguards in place to keep private information on families and children confidential.

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_____

What procedures do you follow when a parent asks to see his/her child's file?

_____

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_____

With the assistance of the person(s) in charge of maintaining child/family records, complete the following questionnaire:

Are standardized forms used for record keeping throughout the program? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Are there documents that record when parents refuse permission for health services for their children? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Are there physician instructions and written parent authorizations for all medications administered by staff ? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

When medication is given to the child is the amount, time, date and person giving it recorded?

❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Do files on enrolled children indicate that needed follow-up occurred when health needs were identified? Were parents contacted? If necessary, was assistance provided with transportation or payment for medication? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Is there a method for staff to report observations of child abuse and neglect in accordance with local laws? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Do you seek parents' permission and transfer file information when a child leaves Head Start?

❑ Yes ❑ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Reporting Systems:

Interview:

Interview members of the program management team and ask:

What kinds of data are collected and what kinds of reports are generated to inform you about program operations?

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_____

What procedures are in place for producing and disseminating status reports, including those related to child outcomes?

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How do you use these reports to manage the program? (See if reports are shared with other managers and the program director)

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_____

To what extent is your program engaged in automated information systems?

_____

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Interview the Head Start Director and ask:

Are there record-keeping and reporting systems that help decision-makers track the program's progress in achieving goals and objectives?

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When you determine that services need to change to better meet the needs of children and families, are these changes reflected in your written plans? What is the process you use to make this happen?

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How is information regarding this Head Start program made available to the public?

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Specific Questions for the program director about the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR):

How is the information collected from across the program?

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Is the information analyzed for accuracy and correctness in any way? For example, is the information compared to the same data contained in other management information reports for the same time period to see if it is in agreement?

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Is the information in the PIR used by managers and staff to identify possible performance problems and make improvements? Give examples. Is the information integrated with the program's annual planning process?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Record-Keeping and Reporting

Areas where program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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CHILD/FAMILY AUDIT

Instructions:

For each file you review, place the child's name and identifying information in the space provided across the top of the instrument. Review each file and mark (X) if you find verification of the Head Start requirement within the file. Mark (0) if no evidence is found.

Before starting, ask a staff member to show you how the files are organized and where each piece of information is typically located.

While conducting your audit, note patterns that emerge which point to a potential weakness in the program's overall record keeping system, such as lack of documentation, incorrect documentation by new staff, etc. Include the information in your summary.

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CHILD/FAMILY FILE AUDIT
Duplicate this form as Needed.

Child's name or identifying information

Information/Service													Total
Income verification signed by staff													
Meets income eligibility? (yes/no)													
Meets age eligibility?													
Enrollment forms													
No income verification for 2nd year enrollees													
Regular interaction with families (some in the home)													
Preexisting family plans (in some, not all families)													
Family Partnership Agreement (FPA)													

CHILD/FAMILY FILE AUDIT

Child's name or identifying information

Information/Service																	Total
Referrals to community resources? (yes/no)																	
Follow-up on referrals (yes/no)																	
Individual child developmental screening																	
Individual child developmental assessment (at 3 points during year)																	
Center-based: # education staff home visits																	
Center-based: #staff/parent conferences (2 required)																	
Home-based: # home-based visits																	

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CHILD/FAMILY FILE REVIEW CHECKLIST

Child's name or identifying information

Information/Service													Total
Emergency contact information													
Child's medical, dental and development history													
Medical home established within 90 days													
HEALTH SCREENINGS:													
Growth assessment													
Immunization status													
Vision													
Hearing													
Other EPSDT screenings:													
(individual programs complete)													

CHILD/FAMILY FILE REVIEW CHECKLIST

Child's name or identifying information

Information/Service																		Total
Developmental/sensory screening completed within 45 days?																		
SIGNED MEDICAL EXAM																		
Medical treatment needed? (yes/no)																		
Treatment completed, if needed																		
COMPLETED DENTAL EXAM																		
Dental treatment needed? (yes/no)																		
Treatment completed, if needed																		

For HS 3 to 5 yr. olds

55

CHILD/FAMILY FILE AUDIT

Child's name or identifying information

Information/Service																	Total
Documentation of well-baby visits																	
Medical treatment needed?																	
Treatment completed																	
Forwarding of records at end of HS/EHS																	
IEPs (HS children w/ disabilities only)																	
IFSP (EHS children w/ disabilities only)																	

For EHS only

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❺

Management Systems: Ongoing Monitoring

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How effective is the grantee's ongoing monitoring system in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Ongoing Monitoring helps to ensure that Federal regulations and local goals and objectives are being achieved, and to ensure that appropriate interventions are being taken in a timely manner. (Rationale to 1304.51(i)(2), p. 188)

This booklet will help the team assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to monitoring program operations and those of delegate agencies (if applicable). Related performance standards include: 1304.51(i)(2)-(3); 1308.4(d); Part 74.51; Part 92.40

As you conduct your assessment of the program's ongoing monitoring systems, look for evidence that managers:

- Analyze data and information contained in tracking systems and written reports;
- Engage in on-site observation and supervision of staff;
- Have a system in place for tracking patterns of progress and accomplishments for groups of three to five year old children in the eight domains of learning,, health and disabilities services and family and community partnerships. The eight domains of learning and development for three to five year old children are:
    * Language Development
    * Literacy
    * Mathematics
    * Science
    * Creative Arts
    * Social & Emotional Development
    * Approaches Toward Learning
    * Physical Health and Development
- Use information from reports, observations, etc. to take corrective action and make program changes.

Review:

The self-assessment team member should review:

- Program policies and procedures relating to ongoing monitoring;
- Sample tracking reports; and
- Written documentation of periodic monitoring activities, including reports to any delegate agencies.

Use the checklist below to assist your document review:

Are there tracking/reporting systems in place and regular monitoring activities occurring in each of the following service areas?:

	Yes	No	Comment
Child Development			
Health			
Mental Health			
Disabilities			
Nutrition			
Family Partnerships			
Transition			
Community Partnerships			
Parent Involvement			

Interview:

Interview program management staff and ask them to describe their system for ensuring that program operations are being implemented properly and according to plan.

Questions may include:

In what ways are staff supervised and observed on-site to assure that services of consistent quality are delivered?

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How are services to children with disabilities tracked and monitored?

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For programs with delegate agencies:

What is your system for monitoring your delegate agencies to assure quality services are implemented? What have your recent monitoring efforts revealed?

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For programs with child care partnerships:

What is your system for monitoring partnership classrooms to assure quality services are implemented? What have your recent monitoring efforts revealed?

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How do you use program tracking reports and other reports?

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Can you share an example of how your analysis of child outcome information for three to five year old children has resulted in program change?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Ongoing Monitoring

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❻

Management Systems: Human Resources

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How effective is the grantee's human resources management system in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that programs recruit and select dynamic, qualified staff who possess the knowledge, skills and experience needed to provide high quality, comprehensive and culturally sensitive services to children and families in the program. Staff should be regarded as one of the program's greatest assets.

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to personnel, staff qualifications, hiring, performance appraisals, etc. Performance standards: 1301.31, including Appendix A; 1304.24(a)(2)-1304.24(a)(3); 1304.52; 1306.20-1306.23; 1308.4(e); 1308.4(k); 1310.16-1310.17

As you conduct your assessment of human resources management, pay close attention to:

- How staff are organized to support the program
- How staff are oriented to their positions and supervised
- The program's system to support training and professional development, especially in the area of teacher qualifications

Review:

Ask the Head Start director or personnel manager to provide you access to the following:

- Organizational chart of staff or list of staff and their functions
- Program personnel policies
- Sample of teacher files
- Sample of staff files
- Performance appraisals

- Professional development/training plans for staff (individual and agency-wide)
- Child abuse reporting policy

Use the checklist below to assist your document review:

Are there job descriptions of each staff position, including qualifications and roles and responsibilities?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there formal procedures for the recruitment, selection and termination of staff?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are references verified and backgrounds checked (in accordance with State law or administrative requirement) conducted before hiring job applicants?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does the program have in place standards of conduct by which all employees must abide?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence that regular volunteers are asked and required to have tuberculosis testing?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there procedures for conducting staff performance appraisals? Is there evidence that procedures are being followed? Are appraisals conducted at least once each year?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there an assurance that the program is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or disability?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there procedures for managing employee grievances and adverse actions?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Checklist for reviewing personnel files:

Content Area Expert Qualifications:

Is there evidence that lead teachers have proper qualifications?
Classroom (lead) teacher qualifications:
50% of teachers have Associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in early childhood education or Associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience in teaching preschool children.

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Or

Child development associate (CDA); state certificate for preschool teachers; or degree in a field related to early childhood education, with experience in teaching preschool children and a state certificate to teach preschool.

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Or

If the teacher does not have the above qualification, enrollment in a 2 or 4-year degree program that will grant degree to the individual within 180 days of employment.

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Note: For programs who use consultants to provide content area expertise, consultants must also meet qualifications outlined in performance standards.

Do health service staff have experience and training in public health, nursing, health education, maternal and child health, or health administration?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Are nutrition services staff registered or licensed dietitians or nutritionists?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Are mental health services staff licensed or certified mental health professionals with experience and expertise in serving young children and their families?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do family and community partnership services staff have training or experience in fields related to social, human or family services?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does parent involvement services staff have training, experience and skills in assisting the parents of young children in advocating and decision-making for their families?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does disability services staff have training or experience in securing and individualizing needed services for children with disabilities?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does home visitor staff have knowledge and experience in child development and early childhood education; the principles of child health, safety, and nutrition; adult learning principles; and family dynamics? Are they skilled in communicating with and motivating people? Do they have knowledge of community resources and the skills to link families with appropriate agencies and services?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do transportation services staff have the proper qualifications (including licenses)?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

 Do transportation services staff receive ongoing training to increase knowledge and skills?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does Early Head Start staff have a CDA credential for infant and toddler caregivers or equivalent credential? Do they have the training and experience necessary to develop supportive relationships with very young children?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence that employees are in good health and have been screened for tuberculosis?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does the program's child abuse policy comply with state law?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Interview:

Talk with a number of different staff persons from different segments of the organization. Be sure to include staff from all segments of your organization (e.g., food service, transportation, etc.)

Guiding questions:

Tell me about how you learn what is expected of you in your position and the kinds of support you get to help you do a better job.

_____

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_____

How did you learn about the Head Start philosophy and the HS performance standards?

_____

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_____

Who has the responsibility for the following tasks associated with child outcomes and how were these staff persons trained?

- Summarizing child assessment information
- Analyzing and interpreting results
- Planning
- Data collection and tracking

_____

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Describe the performance appraisal process. How often does it occur?

_____

_____

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_____

Are you provided opportunities for professional development? Do any of these opportunities afford course credit or lead to higher degrees?

_____

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_____

Are you aware of the program's policies regarding the reporting of child abuse and neglect? Can you briefly describe the process?

_____

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Human Resources

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❼

Management Systems: Fiscal Management

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How effective is the fiscal management system in supporting the implementation of quality services to children and families?

Purpose:

Fiscal Management means having a system of administering resources including funds, property and equipment. A fiscal management system is necessary to ensure that limited resources, allocated carefully and accountably, support the program's delivery of quality services.

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to fiscal management, budgeting, and expenditures. Related performance standards include: 1301.10-1301.13, Subpart B; 1301.20-1301.21, Subpart C; 1301.32-1301.33; 1304.20(c)(5); 1304.23(b)(1)(i); 1304.50(f); 1304.50(g)(2); 1304.51(h)(1)-1304.51(h)(2); 1304.52(d)(8); 1305.9; 1308.4(m)-1308.4(o); 1310.23(b); Part 74, Subpart C; Part 92, Subpart C

As you conduct your assessment of the program's fiscal management systems, pay close attention to:

- How federal regulations regarding fiscal management are met
- How the budget is developed and approved
- How expenditures are monitored
- What fiscal reports are produced and how they are used
- How the grantee maintains accountability
- How investment choices are made

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview the program's fiscal officer and Head Start director. Use the questions below to assist you with interview:

Describe the fiscal system and how the management team and the fiscal officers work together to support the delivery of Head Start services. How do they interact during the year to support the Head Start program?

_____

_____

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_____

How is the budget developed and approved? Describe the involvement of the Policy Council? Are there written procedures describing this process? Is there a timeline?

_____

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How are expenditures monitored? What reports are produced and how are they used?
(Try to find out who receives regular financial reports, how often, and how the budget is compared to actual expenditures.)

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Has the program conducted a cost analysis of providing transportation services? Does your cost analysis reflect the true cost of providing transportation services? Do the results suggest any changes to these services?

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Review:

Use your interview with the director and chief financial officer to help complete the attached fiscal checklist and its list of documents to review.

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Fiscal Management

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Fiscal Checklist

Files Reviewed and/or Persons Interviewed:

_____

_____

This form will help you, as a member of the self-assessment team, to record your observations regarding several key items relating to fiscal management. It is designed to assist you in answering the Core Question in the Fiscal Management booklet and is organized into several topic areas. You will find the topic area listed in bold on the left-hand side of the page and a list of items under it. Please record your observations in the space provided. Provide enough detail so that a person reading this form can understand your observations of each area and your sources of information (e.g., documents reviewed, person interviewed). Observations can be based on your review of documents and/or interviews with key personnel. Some documents that you may find useful include:

- Current and prior financial statements
- Detailed general ledger or A/P disbursements journal
- Written accounting procedures
- Program budget planning documents
- Chart of accounts
- Audit reports
- Grant proposals
- Notice of Grant award
- Indirect cost agreement/cost allocation plan

- Lease agreements
- Property inventory and files for recent major purchases
- Procurement policies
- Codes of conduct from personnel policies
- Payroll journal
- 269s
- PMS-272s
- Insurance Policies
- Interagency agreements
- Disabilities service plan

Area # 1: Accounting and Budget Practices			Observations and Comments
There are written accounting procedures to determine allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of costs and ensure that costs were incurred during the funding period.	Yes	No	
When was the last time the procedures were updated?	Yes	No	Date:
There is a method so that budgeted costs are compared to actual costs.	Yes	No	
Financial Reports are communicated regularly to governing bodies, program management, and policy groups.	Yes	No	
Financial data and records were used in preparing the SF-269s and PMS-272s for the budget period.	Yes	No	
Previous audit deficiencies have been addressed and/or corrective actions have been implemented	Yes	No	

Area # 2: Development and Administrative Costs			Observations and Comments
Costs for development and administration are necessary and of benefit to the program and do not exceed 15% of total costs unless a waiver has been granted.	Yes	No	

Area # 3: Non-Federal Share			Observations and Comments
The Federal financial assistance award to the grantee does not exceed 80% of the total grantee budget unless a waiver has been granted.	Yes	No	
The source, use and accounting of non-federal funds meet the requirements, and accounting of funds are supported by the proper source documents.	Yes	No	
Volunteer services are accounted for properly.	Yes	No	
How does the program account for the non-federal share?			Comment:
Are there written policies?	Yes	No	
Is in-kind accumulated each month?	Yes	No	
Verify 20% net or grantee share of the total budget.	Yes	No	
Is there documentation to support in-kind?	Yes	No	

Area # 4: Property Management	Yes	No	Observations and Comments
Grantee property management standards for non-expendable personal property include requirements for (a) accurate property records (including vehicle titles) covering all items over $5,000 or lower, if a lower threshold is defined by the local agency; (b) conducting a physical inventory at least once every two years; and (c) a control system to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss, damage or theft to the property and to investigate and document any loss.	Yes	No	
If the grantee owns any of the facilities used for the program during the budget period, the grantee only charges a depreciation or use allowance based on the purchase price. (Please note exception in Head Start Act as amended 10/1/94 for HHS/ACF authorized acquisitions.)	Yes	No	
If the grantee rents any facilities, lease agreements show that charges are reasonable.	Yes	No	
If the grantee is using occupancy costs as non-Federal share, values are calculated appropriately.	Yes	No	
Renovations included in the grant are appropriate and charged in accordance with the cost principles and ACF guidance.	Yes	No	

Area # 5: Procurement			Observations and Comments
The grantee has established written procurement policies and procedures which, at a minimum, provide for a review of (a) proposed procurements to determine need and possible alternatives, (b) requests for bids that contain clear specifications and do not contain features which unduly restrict competition, (c) positive efforts to use small and minority-owned businesses, (d) price comparison or cost analysis on all procurements, (e) checking of invoices against purchase orders and receiving reports, (f) goods and services being provided prior to payment, (g) maintenance of files for all large purchases, (h) contractor follow-up, (i) reviews of recent purchases over the simplified acquisition threshold of $100,000. Also, contractors are excluded from bidding on items in which they have a prior interest.	Yes	No	
All procurement transactions are conducted in a manner providing maximum open and free competition.	Yes	No	
The grantee maintains a code of conduct as part of personnel policies and procedures which requires that officers, employees, or agents engaged in the award and administration of contracts do not accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.	Yes	No	
Arrangements are made for bonding those authorized to disburse program funds.	Yes	No	
There is proof that the agency has all required insurance (e.g., liability insurance, insurance on vehicles, student accident).	Yes	No	
All contracts/agreements are available, contain all applicable provisions under 45 CFR 92.36(I), appear to be in the best interest of the grantee, and are signed and dated.	Yes	No	Comment:

Area # 6: USDA and Food Costs			Observations and Comments
Head Start funds are used for only allowable meal service costs not covered by USDA.	Yes	No	
The grantee was paid in advance or by reimbursement for USDA food costs, and there is a method used to establish the number of meals for which reimbursement was claimed.	Yes	No	
Budgeted food costs compare reasonably with actual food costs recorded in the grantee financial records.	Yes	No	
USDA income guidelines are used in preparing the documentation submitted to USDA for application for Child Care Food Program participation.	Yes	No	

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❽

Child Development and Health Services: Prevention & Early Intervention

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee implement a comprehensive system of services for preventing health problems and intervening promptly when they exist?

Purpose:

The objective is to support healthy physical development by encouraging practices that prevent illness or injury, and by promoting positive, culturally relevant health behaviors that enhance life-long well-being. (Introduction to 1304.22, p. 83)

This booklet will help you assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to Prevention & Early Intervention. Related performance standards include: 1304.20; 1304.21(c)(1)(iii); 1304.22-1304.24; 1304.40(c)(2)-(3); 1304.40(f); 1304.41(a)(2); 1304.41(b); 1304.53(a)(6); 1304.53(a)(8); 1304.53(a)(10)(I)-1304.53(a)(10)(iii); 1304.53(a)(10)(v)-1304.53(a)(10)(xvii); 1306.30(c); 1306.33(c)(3); 1308.6; 1308.20; 1304.40(c)(1)(I)-(iii); 1304.40(c)(2); 1310.21

As you conduct your assessment of the program's prevention and early intervention activities, pay close attention to how the program ensures that:

- Parents are involved as full partners in prevention and early intervention
- Children and families are linked to an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care and children are kept up-to-date on a schedule of well-child care
- Preventive health practices are taught to children and parents
- Nutrition and mental health services are provided to children and families that are responsive to their needs

Review:

Members of the self-assessment team should review:
- The results of the child/family record audit conducted by the team assessing record keeping and reporting and/or a sample of children's records
- Written plans describing health, nutrition, and mental health services
- Health and safety policies and procedures
- Sample menus
- Bus ride checklist

Note: The team reviewing record keeping and reporting systems has responsibility to complete an audit of children/family records as a part of their assessment. Review the results of their audit and ask team members if they discovered answers to the following questions. You may want to supplement this information by reviewing a number of sample files on your own.

Do children's files indicate that the program assessed whether the child has an ongoing, continuous source of health care within 90 days of entry into the program?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do files contain the information necessary to assess if children are up-to-date with well-child care visits and have received recommended immunizations and screenings?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

If the program did not identify a source of health care, is there evidence of assistance provided to the parents to find one?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence in the file that parents are informed and made aware of the various screenings as they occur (permission forms, contact notes, home visit reports, notification of results)?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Review written plans describing health, nutrition, and mental health services to answer the following:

Is there evidence that these plans have been updated so that services respond to community assessment data and meet the current needs of children and families?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do plans describe the use of early intervention and education strategies so that services are preventive in nature?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence that parents and children have received training on pedestrian safety and bus safety practices?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Review sample menus to answer the following:

Are there a variety of foods made available to children, taking into account cultural and ethnic preferences?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do the menus contain nutritious well-balanced meals that are age-appropriate?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Observe:

Obtain the results of the Health and Safety Checklist and the Bus Ride Checklist administered by the team responsible for the Facilities , Materials, Equipment and Transportation booklet.

Interview:

Make arrangements to meet and interview health, nutrition, mental health, and transportation services staff.

Sample questions for the manager of health and nutrition services and/or the nutrition consultant:

Describe your approach to providing preventive health services to children and families at Head Start.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you go about accessing medical services for families who are not connected to a regular system of health care? (i.e. , Does the program assist families in accessing their state CHIP program?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

What do you do when families do not have dental services?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe to me how nutritional services are provided to children and families in this program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you ensure that the meals served to children meet all USDA regulations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you accommodate special dietary needs for individual children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe to me how health and nutrition education is provided to children. (listen to see if these services are integrated into child development experiences)

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you share information with families that promote nutrition, health, and safety at home?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample questions for the manager of mental health services and/or the mental health consultant:

Is there a regular schedule of visits by a mental health professional?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe how the Mental Health Consultant works with staff:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe how the Mental Health Consultant works with children and families:

_____

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Sample Questions for Early Head Start Managers:

How does this team make sure there is a comprehensive system for preventing health problems and for intervening when problems exist especially with regard to pregnant women and children from birth to three years of age?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the Early Head Start program work with pregnant women to provide education about and access to health services and resources?

_____

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Sample Question for Person Responsible for Transportation Services:

How does the program ensure that all parents and children are trained on pedestrian safety and bus safety practices?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Prevention and Early Intervention

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❾

Child Development and Health Services: Tracking and Follow-up

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee track the provision of all child health and developmental services and ensure that follow-up services are received in a timely manner?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that all child health and developmental concerns are identified, and children and families are linked to an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care to meet their basic needs. (Introduction to 1304.20, p. 41)

This booklet will help you assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to monitoring and necessary follow-up of all child health and developmental services. Related performance standards include: 1304.20(c)-1304.20(f); 1304.41(a)(1); 1304.51(g); 1308.18.

As you conduct your assessment of the program's health care tracking and follow-up, pay close attention to how the program:

- Utilizes a system for tracking health and developmental services to provide a safety net for children to ensure that they receive all necessary services
- Promotes communication between and among managers and staff to plan and coordinate follow-up services in an integrated way
- Accesses community resources to connect children and families with follow-up services

Review:

Review written plans, policies, procedures pertaining to the delivery of health services to complete the following:

Are there procedures to track the provision of health care services?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there written procedures on the handling, storage and administration of medications?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there procedures by which staff can identify any new or recurring medical, dental or developmental concerns so that they may quickly make appropriate referrals?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

> Note: At least one staff person should sit on this review team so they can access and review child/family files. Other team members may not have access to these files based on the program's confidentiality policy.

Ask your team leader to provide you with a number of children's records that represent children with identified health and nutritional needs. Review these records to answer the following:

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are parents requested to inform the program of a child's particular health needs and dietary considerations (allergies, medications) upon enrollment?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do the files indicate that follow-up plans have been developed and implemented for health conditions that have been identified?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are doctor's instructions and parental consent obtained before medication is administered?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there a record maintained of all medications dispensed?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is the record reviewed regularly with parents?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview the health manager or designee.
Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

What are your procedures for tracking child health services?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you make sure follow-up treatments are provided in a timely manner?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe the system that you use within your own program to integrate and coordinate services to children and families.

Do managers meet regularly to communicate about and coordinate services? Describe that process.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do direct service staff (e.g., teachers and family service workers) meet to coordinate services? Describe that process.

_____

_____

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_____

Describe the role that the parent plays in arranging and providing for follow-up services to children.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe the role that direct service staff (e.g., teachers, family service workers) have in implementing follow-up services to children.

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How has the program reached out to partner with health care providers and other providers in the community to link up children and families with needed services?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Tracking and Follow-Up

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❿

Child Development and Health Services: Individualization

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee, in consultation with the family, individualize the program of child development and health services to meet each child's unique characteristics, strengths and needs?

Purpose:

Individualization assures that the program recognizes the uniqueness of each child and assures that staff tailor approaches to child development, education and family partnership.

This booklet will help the team assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to how services are tailored to each child. Related performance standards include: 1304.20(d); 1304.20(f); 1301.21(a); 1304.21(c)(1)(i); 1304.23(b)(1); 1304.40(a)(2); 1308.19.

As you conduct your assessment of the program's ability to individualize child development and health services for children, look for evidence that:

- Families are involved in establishing goals for their children
- The system used by the program to assess children is ongoing
- Individualization addresses:
  - Child interests
  - The eight domains of learning and development
  - Temperament
  - Language
  - Cultural background
  - Learning style
- Teaching staff tie individual children's goals into the overall curriculum

Review:

The team member should review children's files from a number of different classrooms and program options for:

- evidence of individualized planning; and
- evidence that plans address child interests, developmental strengths, temperament, needs, language, cultural background, and learning style.

Reminder: a member of the staff serving on the self-assessment team must conduct file reviews.

Record your results below:

My review of _____(fill in number) child files revealed that:

_____ all files show evidence of individualized planning
_____ a substantial number of files show evidence of individualized planning
_____ very few files show evidence of individualized planning

Comments:

_____

_____

(Please check appropriate column)	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely
Files revealed that individualization addresses:			
• child interests			
• developmental strengths			
• temperament			
• needs			
• learning styles			
• languages			
• cultural background			
• health/nutrition considerations			
Information in the child files reveals that parents provide input into the education and child development services that are planned for their child			
Classroom curriculum plans reflect individualization and are based on information contained in the child files			

Observe:

Two members of the assessment team, one staff person with a child development background and another staff person or parent, would select a specific number of children to observe. The "observation team" might have two or three "focus" children. In conducting an observation, focus on one child at a time for no less than 30 minutes.

Use the tool "Guidelines for Observing Individualization of the Curriculum for Infants/Toddlers and Pre-School Children in Early Head Start and Head Start Classrooms, Childcare, Family Childcare and Home Based Options," at the back of this individualization booklet. The instrument is based on the PRISM Classroom Observation and PRISM Home Visit Observation Instruments and the National Institute for Child Health and Development Caregiver Language Checklist. This tool is designed to complement the "Classroom, Family Child Care or Socialization Observation Instrument" in the Curriculum Booklet.

Interview:

A member of the assessment team should interview teachers and/or home visitors, family child care providers, and a sample of parents. Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

Questions for education managers, teaching staff and home visitors:

How does the curriculum support individual needs, abilities and learning styles of children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What information contributes to individualized planning for each child?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe the practices within your program that ensure a continuity of services and care for children as they enter and exit the program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

For Early Head Start: Are there adequate transitions from EHS or another setting in the community? Does transition planning for EHS children begin six months before the child's third birthday?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the program involve parents in supporting individualized child development?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for parents include:

What kinds of things is your child learning by participating in Head Start?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there other things that you would like to see your child learning? If yes, have you discussed this with your child's teacher/home visitor?

_____

_____

_____

Have you participated in home visits with the teaching staff as well as staff/parent conferences?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tell me about those visits and conferences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you work together with your child's teacher/home visitor to plan activities that you can do with your child in your home?

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_____

_____

_____

Additional observation, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Individualization

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Observing How the Curriculum is Individualized for Infants/Toddlers and Pre-School Children in EHS and Head Start Classrooms, Child Care, Family Child Care and Home-Based Options

Select a specific number of children who will be observed. Each observer may have two or three "focus" children. In conducting an observation focus on one child at a time for no less than 30 minutes. Duplicate sheets as needed.

The main goals are to describe:
1) What the child is doing.
2) What the teacher/caregiver does in relationship to that child.
3) How the child responds to the teacher/caregiver.

In the home based option the main goals are to describe:
1) What you observe the child and parent doing.
2) What you observe the home visitor doing as the parent and child interact (Early Head Start) or as the home visitor interacts directly with the child (more likely in Head Start).

Name _____   Date & Time _____

Curriculum Areas	Child/Caregiver Interactions	Home Visitor/Parent-Child Interactions
Language Development Describe: • The child's vocalizations or bids for attention (an infant may vocalize without words or get a caregiver's attention through eye contact, a toddler or pre-schooler may ask a question or talk to the teacher). • The adult's response e.g. the caregiver responds verbally by repeating a sound, or naming the object the infant/toddler is pointing to or comments on what the child said. • The caregiver asks a question, praises a child, "teaches" a child ("this is a ball", counts, points out letters, describes an emotion). • The infant/toddler or young child interacting vocally with other children and the teacher (e.g., describing the interaction between or among children).		

Curriculum Areas	Child/Caregiver Interactions	Home Visitor/Parent-Child Interactions
Interests and Capabilities Describe: • What a child is playing with e.g. specific toy, looking in mirror, reading a book, building with blocks. • What the teacher/caregiver does to support the child e.g. notices what he/she is working on, takes out a special puzzle or helps a child with a disability participate in a physical game by holding hands or going slowly		

Curriculum Areas	Child/Caregiver Interactions	Home Visitor/Parent-Child Interactions
Social and Emotional Development Describe: • The child's emotional expressions e.g. smile, frown, tears. • The teacher/caregiver's responses e.g. smile, hug, verbalizations. • The child's looking toward a teacher or asking for teacher's help • The teacher's response. .		

Curriculum Areas	Child/Caregiver Interactions	Home Visitor/Parent-Child Interactions
Physical Development Describe: • The child's physical activities e.g. walking, crawling. • How the environment supports them, how the teacher/caregiver responds e.g. offers a hand to a new walker.		
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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❶

Child Development and Health Services: Disabilities Services

Core Question to be answered by self-assessment team:

How does the grantee ensure that individual services are effectively provided to children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities?

Purpose:

The purpose is to ensure that children with disabilities enrolled in the program receive all of the services to which they are entitled in the least restrictive environment. (Purpose and application of Part 1308, p. 255)

This booklet will help the self-assessment team determine if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to disabilities services. Related performance standards include: 1304.20(c)(4); 1304.20(f); 1304.21(a)(1)(ii); 1304.23(a)(2); 1304.24(a)(3)(iii); 1304.41(a)(4); 1304.53(a)(10)(xvii); 1304.53(b)(1)(iii); 1308; 1310.22(b)

As you conduct your self-assessment of program's services to children with disabilities, pay close attention to:

- The process used by the program to assess children's needs for special services
- How the program engages parents as partners when planning special services for children
- Evidence of the inclusion of children with disabilities in the Head Start program
- Evidence of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) in Early Head Start programs and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for Head Start programs

Note: Individual programs may wish to substitute terms used in this booklet with terms used by your local school district (e.g., special needs, disabilities, special services, disabilities services).

Observe:

Check in with self-assessment team members assigned to *curriculum* and *individualization*. Ask them to summarize for you what they discovered about the program's approach to serving children with disabilities during their assessment process. In particular, review with them the results of the Curriculum Observation Instrument pertaining to serving children with disabilities.

Review:

Team members should review:

- Written plans describing how disabilities services will be delivered
- Copies of all Interagency Agreements with Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Part C, and other programs serving children with disabilities and their families
- A sample of records for children with disabilities (Note: assign this task to someone on your team who can review children's records without breaching the confidentiality policy of the program)

As you review the above documents and records answer the following:

Is there evidence that the disabilities services plan has been updated annually?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are there interagency agreements between the program and LEAs that provide services to enable the effective participation of children with disabilities?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

For Early Head Start: Is there evidence of a formal partnership with the local Part C agency (provider of early intervention services)?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there an agreement that describes the process for coordinating services for infants and toddlers?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do files demonstrate a timely process for assessing children with suspected disabilities, engaging parents, and arranging for services, as needed? (Note: A meeting to develop the IEP must be held within thirty calendar days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services)

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there evidence of the family's involvement in the development of IEPs and IFSPs?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Do IEPs and IFSPs identify persons responsible for planning, delivering, and supervising services and projected dates for services to begin?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Are transition plans developed for children that provide a continuity of care as children with disabilities move from one program to the next?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview the:

- Manager of disabilities services;
- Teachers, home visitors, family child care teachers, family service workers;
- Parents of children with disabilities; and
- If possible, a representative from the local LEA (Head Start) and/or Part C agency (Early Head Start).

Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

Questions for the Disabilities Manager:

What efforts are taken to recruit children with disabilities (including children with severe disabilities)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there a system in place to track the provision of disability services? Describe the follow-up that occurs when timeframes are not met.

_____

_____

_____

How are children with disabilities included in ongoing assessment? Are <u>all</u> children included? Give examples of how appropriate accommodations were made for their special needs.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Over the past year, what types of modifications has the program made to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the program provide parents with information and assistance in understanding and advocating for services and supports needed to address their child's special needs?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Has the program been successful in accessing the additional resources (including transportation) that may be outlined in the IEPs and IFSPs of the children you serve?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for education staff:

Provide us with some examples of how you have modified the program and individualized services to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in the full range of program activities.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for education/ family services staff:

Provide us with some examples of the information, support, and guidance available to assist you in providing services to children with disabilities and their families.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for families:

Describe how the Head Start program involved you in planning services for your child.

_____

_____

_____

What resources in the community have you heard about through Head Start that can offer you assistance?

_____

_____

_____

Have you participated in any training that specifically prepares you to advocate for your child?

_____

_____

_____

Questions for Program Partners:

Describe your relationship with the Head Start program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have an interagency agreement in place that describes the process you and Head Start will follow to provide services to children with disabilities? If yes, describe the major components of the interagency agreement.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there challenges or barriers you face in providing services to Head Start children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How are you working with Head Start to overcome these barriers?

_____

_____

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Disabilities Services

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❷

Child Development and Health Services: Curriculum and Assessment

Core Question to be answered by the self-assessment team:

How has the grantee engaged in a process of curriculum selection and/or development, implementation, and evaluation resulting in a written plan that supports the growth of children's social competence, including school readiness, for each identified program option?

Purpose:

The objective is to provide all children with a safe, nurturing, engaging, and secure learning environment, in order to help them gain the awareness, skills, and confidence necessary to succeed in their present environment, and to deal with later responsibilities in school and in life. (Introduction to 1304.21, p. 58)

This booklet will help the team assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to curriculum development and implementation. Related performance standards include: 1304.21; 1304.23(b)-1304.23(c); 1304.3(a)(5); 1304.40(e)-1304.40(f); 1306.30(b); 1308.4(c); 1310.21

As you conduct your assessment of the program's ability to work with families to develop an appropriate curriculum, see if you can confirm that:

- Parents have been given the opportunity to be involved in curriculum development
- The written curriculum contains core elements of sound child development principles and developmentally appropriate practices
- The implementation of the curriculum can be evidenced in classrooms, family childcare homes, or in other program options offered by the program

Observe:

The team member should observe a sample of classrooms, socialization settings, and/or family childcare homes (depending on the options offered by your program) using the attached curriculum observation instrument. Duplicate the instrument as necessary to complete a good sampling of the child development services offered by the program.

Review:

The team member should review:
- the written curriculum
- the written plan describing child development services
- daily and weekly classroom plans
- child progress records

Use the checklist below to assist your document review:

Written Curriculum

Does the written curriculum include:

Goals for children's development and learning	❏ Yes ❏ No
The experiences through which they will achieve these goals	❏ Yes ❏ No
What staff and parents do to help children achieve these goals	❏ Yes ❏ No
The materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum?	❏ Yes ❏ No

Is the curriculum consistent with the Performance Standards and based on
sound child development principles?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Does it provide appropriate and comprehensive programming for the social-
emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children of all ages served
by the program?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

For preschool children, does the curriculum include experiences in the eight
domains (language, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and
emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical development
and health)?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Does the curriculum and assessment process support the inclusion of children
with disabilities?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Are health, nutrition, mental health, and safety education integrated into
the curriculum?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Does the curriculum include transition issues?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Does curriculum implementation, including assessment, provide appropriate
environments and comprehensive programming for children, from birth to
five years old?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Is there a written plan describing child development services that gets updated
annually to reflect the changing needs of children?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Ongoing Assessment

Does the ongoing assessment tool address the eight domains and thirteen
mandated elements and indicators?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

Is the tool appropriate to children's ages, languages, cultures, and special needs?   ❑ Yes ❑ No
Comments:

_____

_____

Interview:

A self-assessment team member should interview the education manager and ask:
How does your team engage with parents to select, develop, implement and evaluate the curriculum for each
program option? How do you ensure the curriculum supports the growth of children's social competence?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How have you incorporated outcome-based measures into curriculum development and implementation?

_____

_____

_____

For children who are transported to the program, how is the time spent riding the bus used to reinforce the
curriculum and otherwise foster healthy child development?

_____

_____

_____

A self-assessment team member should interview teachers and/or home visitors and family child care teachers and ask:

How is the curriculum consistent with the Performance Standards and based on sound child development principles?

_____

_____

_____

How are parents involved in curriculum development and reporting child progress?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tell me how your classroom environment and daily schedule supports the curriculum.

_____

_____

_____

What process do you use for curriculum planning?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you evaluate children's progress?

_____

_____

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_____

Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

_____

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Summary of Results for Curriculum

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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**CLASSROOM, FAMILY CHILD CARE, or SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCE
OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT**

Instructions: Make arrangements to visit a cross-section of classrooms, family child care homes, and/or socializations. Be sure to include childcare partnership classrooms in your selection. Spend some time sitting and observing the setting to gather enough information to complete the instrument. You may want to pair with another self-assessment team member. You can then work together to reach consensus regarding your interpretations of the activity you observe. Optimally, at least one team member engaged in this process should have knowledge of appropriate early childhood practice.

Use this observation tool to observe classrooms, family childcare and socializations. *Duplicate this form for each site the self-assessment team visits.*

1. Teacher Interaction and Strategies			
▪ adults using a variety of intentional strategies that vary in complexity; ▪ supervision of all indoor and outdoor activities; and ▪ positive child guidance and appropriate limits.			
Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?			
	Yes	**No**	**Comments**
Examples you might look for include: ● Child-initiated and adult-directed activities; ● Individual and small group experiences; ● Children exploring and making choices; ● Timely, predictable, and unhurried routines and transitions; and ● Talking to babies, singing and playing with them during diaper changes, mealtimes, and other routines.			

2. Facilitating Children's Language and Literacy Development

- Language use and interaction among and between children and adults;
- Adults fostering children's communication, including home language;
- Experiences that develop auditory and visual discrimination;
- Experiences that support creative expression; and
- Experiences that develop school-readiness skills in literacy.

Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?

Examples you might look for include:	Yes	No	Comments
• Alphabet posters, puzzles, and books;			
• Examples of functional print and other materials in appropriate places: mailboxes, sign-in charts, maps, helper charts, and schedules;			
• Opportunities for children to write and dictate stories and messages;			
• Art, music, rhyming songs, and movement;			
• Learning activities such as games, puzzles, and books that promote knowledge of letters (alphabet) and sounds;			
• Adults reading and discussing stories one-on-one and in small groups;			
• Children choosing books to look at alone, to share with a friend, or to take home;			
• Adults and children asking questions and engaged in meaningful conversations; and			
• Experiences, materials, conversation and activities that support the language used at home and English as a second language.			

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3. Facilitating Children's Math and Science Development

- Experiences that develop skills in mathematics and science;
- Experiences that develop auditory and visual discrimination; and
- Opportunities for children to discover how numerical concepts relate to other concepts.

Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?

Examples you might look for include:	Yes	No	Comments
• puzzles, games, unit blocks, and manipulatives that range in complexity;			
• materials and experiences that develop counting, sequencing, and one-to-one correspondence;			
• materials and experiences that encourage understanding of cause and effect and spatial relationships;			
• opportunities for children to discover how mathematical concepts relate to other concepts, for example measuring or weighing;			
• opportunities for children to count, classify, sequence, sort, and match;			
• children experiment, describe, and make predictions;			
• children using recipes for making snacks;			
• children caring for plants and animals, and learning about science in their surroundings; and			
• adults asking questions in ways that extend children's thinking.			

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4. Facilitating Children's Social and Emotional Development

- Experiences that foster independence and trust;
- Age-appropriate expectations of children;
- Adults interacting in supportive ways; and
- Experiences that help children develop social skills, competence, respect for others, and positive attitudes towards learning.

Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?

Examples you might look for include:	Yes	No	Comments
Self-portraits and family pictures;			
Books, stories, puppets, and other dramatic play experiences;			
Interactive games and activities;			
Familiar routines and transitions;			
Clear, consistent age-appropriate rules developed with child input;			
Children accessing materials independently;			
Adults timely response to children's cries and other cues;			
Adults encouraging and modeling problem solving, behaviors, and language; and			
Singing or talking during routines and transitions.			

5. Facilitating Children's Physical Development			
■ Experiences that develop sensory and motor skills; ■ Experiences that develop fine and gross motor skills; ■ Children using and coordinating small muscles, including eyes, hands, and eye-hand coordination; and ■ Sufficient safe indoor and outdoor space with age-appropriate equipment and materials.			
Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?			
Examples you might look for include:	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
• Tools such as blocks, beads, scissors, stapler, and writing or drawing tools, pencils and brushes, as appropriate;			
• Opportunities and sufficient space for children to crawl, sit, walk, run, jump, and climb;			
• Age-and ability-appropriate equipment and materials;			
• Children using motor skills in daily routines such as pouring juice or milk, serving themselves, buttoning and zipping; and			
• Children manipulate materials such as sand, water, and clay.			

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6. Prevention and Early Intervention-Integrating Health, Nutrition, Mental Health, Safety, and Wellness			
▪ health, nutrition, and mental health integrated into routines and children's learning experiences.			
Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?			
Examples you might look for include:	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments**
● toothbrushing and handwashing;			
● children using tissues and throwing them in the wastebasket after use;			
● sufficient time for meals;			
● adults, toddlers, and pre-school children sharing family-style meals and pleasant conversations;			
● infants held while being fed;			
● children involved in food experiences;			
● topical books, songs, games, and fingerplays;			
● children role playing;			
● adults and children talking about visits to the dentist and doctor;			
● experiences representative of children's cultures; and			
● children instructed in pedestrian safety. *Added to PRISM instrument to reflect Performance Standards on Transportation*			

7. Individualizing and Disabilities Services

- respect for the culture, language, ethnicity, family, and ability of each child;
- facilities that ensure children's safety, comfort, and participation;
- environment and curriculum that reflect the IFSP or IEP; and
- adults observing and assessing children's behavior and progress.

Observe: What are the children doing? What are the teachers and adults doing? What is the environment like?

Examples you might look for include:	Yes	No	Comments
books, music, posters, and games in different languages and representing different cultures;			
dolls, posters, pictures and books that represent children with disabilities;			
special furniture, equipment, and materials, if needed, to accommodate a child with disabilities;			
experiences required in the IFSP or IEP;			
adults working with individual children and with small groups of children; and			
Post- its, notebooks, folders, cameras, or other tools used to record observations.			

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HOME VISIT OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Instructions: Make arrangements to visit a cross-section of family child care homes. Spend some time sitting and observing the setting to gather enough information to complete the instrument. You may want to pair with another self-assessment team member. You can then work together to reach consensus regarding your interpretations of the activity you observe. Optimally, at least one team member engaged in this process should have knowledge of appropriate early childhood practice.

Use this observation tool to observe home visits. *Duplicate this form for each site the self-assessment team visits.*

1. Home Visit Interactions and Strategies		
How does the home visitor: ▪ Demonstrate a friendly, cooperative relationship with the family? ▪ Encourage parents to take leadership of the home visit? ▪ Communicate in the family's preferred language? ▪ Use the home as a learning environment and as a resource for curriculum experiences? ▪ Understand the link between home visits and socialization experiences? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**	▪ (*For preschool children*) help parents plan experiences that foster their child's development and learning in the 8 domains? ▪ Help parents improve their parenting skills? ▪ Plan home visits with parents to incorporate all services of the Head Start program? ▪ Evaluate the home visit with parents?	
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:		

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2. Facilitating Children's Language and Literacy Development		
How does the home visitor help parents: - Understand how children learn? - Provide age-appropriate experiences that support child language and literacy learning and development? - Provide school-readiness experiences through home visits and group socializations that reflect the program's curriculum? - Value creative expression? - Foster communication, including communication in the language spoken in the home? - Develop auditory and visual discrimination? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**		
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:		

3. Facilitating Children's Math and Science Development

How does the home visitor help parents provide:

- Experiences that develop skills in mathematics?
- Experiences that develop skills in science?
- Experiences that develop auditory and visual discrimination?
- Opportunities for children to discover how numerical concepts relate to other concepts?

Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the environment like?

Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:

4. Facilitating Children's Social and Emotional Development		
How do the home visits help parents: • Provide experiences that foster independence? • Develop age-appropriate expectations of children? • Interact in supportive ways? • Help children develop social skills, respect for others, and friendships? • Help children feel successful, competent, and positive toward learning? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**		
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:		

5. Facilitating Children's Physical Development		
How does the home visitor help parents: ■ Provide experiences that develop sensory and motor skills? ■ Provide experiences that develop fine and gross motor skills? ■ Assist children in using and coordinating small muscles including eyes, hands, and eye-hand coordination? ■ Provide sufficient safe age-appropriate equipment and materials? ■ Supervise their child during physical activities? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**		
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:		

6. Curriculum: Prevention and Early Intervention-Integrating Health, Nutrition, Mental Health, Safety and Wellness
How does the home visitor help parents: ■ Ensure a safe environment? ■ Promote health, nutrition and wellness? ■ Understand and use health and hygiene practice? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:

7. Curriculum: Individualizing and Disabilities Services

How does the home visitor and the parent demonstrate:

- Planning and implementation of experiences that match the child's current developmental level?
- Understanding of ways to adapt or change activities for the child?
- Understanding and use of health and hygiene practice?

Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?

Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:

8. Family Partnerships
How does the home visitor: ■ Support positive relationships? ■ Respect the home language and culture? ■ Encourage parents to get involved in other areas of the Head Start program? ■ Support parents in progress towards their goals? **Observe: What are the adults doing? What is the child doing?**
Issues, Questions, and Follow-up:

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❸

Family and Community Partnerships: Family Partnership Building

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents?

Purpose:

The objective is to support mothers and fathers as they identify and meet their own goals, nurture the development of their children in the context of the family and culture, and advocate for communities that are supportive of children and families of all cultures. (Introduction to 1304.40, p. 125)

This booklet will help the self-assessment team determine if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to working with parents. Related performance standards include: 1304.20(e); 1304.21(a)(2); 1304.239(b)(4); 1304.40; 1304.50(a)(1); 1306.30(b); 1308.19(j); 1308.21

As you conduct your assessment of the program's services in the area of family partnerships, pay close attention to:

- The approach that the program uses to build a partnership relationship with families
- How staff work with families to identify family goals, strengths, necessary services, and supports to formulate a family partnership agreement
- The program staff's knowledge of community resources
- The system the program uses for tracking and follow-up with families
- (For Early Head Start programs only) How the program provides assistance to pregnant women so they can obtain comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care
- Inclusion of fathers

Review:

Ask your self-assessment team leader to provide you with a copy of:

- a family partnership written plan;
- a sample number of family records (In order to maintain confidentiality, only a staff member serving on your self-assessment team can review these files); and
- a listing of the community resources most commonly used to support families.

Use the questions below to assist your document review.

Has the written plan been updated within the past year to reflect how the program will respond to any new needs of families?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Look for evidence of family partnership agreements in the majority of family files that describe:

⇒ family goals   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ timetables   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ strategies for achieving the goals   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ progress in achieving goals   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Do file notes and reports indicate that families are being referred to resources in the community?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do family services staff conduct follow-up with families to determine the quality of services received through Head start referrals?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do community resource listings include resources for:

⇒ Emergency or crisis assistance   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ Counseling services   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ Education and employment training   ❏ Yes ❏ No

⇒ Prenatal health services (EHS)   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview:

- The manager of family partnership services and members of his/her staff;
- A number of families.

Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

Questions for Family Partnership Staff:

How do you build partnerships with families? What are the first things you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you help families transition from Early Head Start to Head Start or from Head Start to public school?

_____

_____

_____

Questions for Manager:

How do you monitor family partnership activity to ensure that services are being delivered according to plan?

_____

_____

_____

Where do you think you should focus your attention and resources to further improve family partnership services in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for staff providing Early Head Start services to expectant families:

Describe how you assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum health care. Provide one or two real examples.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does your program provide for prenatal education? What does that education include?

_____

_____

_____

_____

The performance standards require programs to provide early and continuing risk assessments. How is that done in this program?

_____

_____

_____

How does the program educate pregnant women about the benefits of breastfeeding?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for expectant families:

Briefly describe the types of services you have received from the Early Head Start program. (Listen for evidence that that the program is providing for risk assessments, timely referrals to community resources for prenatal and postpartum health care as well as mental health services, as appropriate.)

_____

_____

_____

Questions for families:

Tell me how you first learned about the family services that Head Start provides.

_____

_____

_____

Can you describe to me how you have worked with family services staff throughout the year? What goals have you been working on? How has staff supported you in reaching those goals?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other Family Service Considerations

Interview

Ask the manager responsible for coordinating family services:

Are some of your program's families considering marriage or are having difficulty with their marriage? If so, what services, either offered directly or by referral, are available? How do you connect families to these resources?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Interview

Ask the manager responsible for coordinating services relating to positive youth development:

How do you talk with parents about issues and concerns that are affecting older siblings of their Head Start children?

_____

_____

_____

Have you identified supportive services for youth in your community? How do you connect Head Start families with older children to these resources?

_____

_____

_____

How do you provide opportunities for young people to get involved with your Head Start program?

_____

_____

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Family Partnership Building

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❹

Family and Community Partnerships: Parent Involvement

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee provide parent involvement opportunities in all aspects of the Head Start program?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that parents are provided opportunities for growth that reflect their needs, desires, and input so they become strong partners in the education of their child.

This booklet will help the self-assessment team determine if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to parent involvement. Related performance standards include: 1304.20(e)(4); 1304.23(d); 1304.24(a)(1); 1304.40(b)-1304.40(h); 1304.50; 1308.19(j); 1308.21

As you conduct your assessment of the program's services in the area of parent involvement, pay close attention to:

- How the program promotes parent involvement in each of the service areas: education, mental health, health, nutrition, disabilities, transition, and family partnership
- Information pertaining to opportunities in the program for parent leadership (e.g., Advisory Committee meetings, Policy Council, community partnership activity, etc.)
- The different opportunities that the program offers for families and whether or not they are responsive to the expressed needs of the families they serve
- How the program reaches out to both mothers and fathers whether they live together or not

Observe:

As you spend time in the Head Start program during the self-assessment process, take note as to how parents are involved in the program.

As you enter each center, is the atmosphere warm and inviting to families, including fathers?

_____

_____

_____

Are current or former parents serving as volunteers and paid staff?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are parents engaged in group meetings? What are the meetings about?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Review:

Ask the team leader to provide you with the following documents to review:

- Sample files to review for documentation of home visits and parent/teacher conferences (only staff serving on self-assessment team are permitted to review files);
- Records of parent involvement activities;
- Parent training records and training calendars; and
- Plan for parent involvement (this may be integrated into other program plans).

Use the questions below to assist you in your review:

Is there evidence in child/family records of at least two staff-parent conferences conducted per program year?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Do you see evidence that the information obtained from families during home visits and parent/teacher conferences influence the services that are provided to children and families?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

In files pertaining to children with disabilities, is there evidence that parents are involved in the process of developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Early Head Start:

In files pertaining to children with disabilities, is there evidence that parents are involved in the process of developing an Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP)?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Does the program provide the following opportunities for families:	Yes	No
Opportunities to enhance parenting skills		
Opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services		
Medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs		
Opportunities to participate in community advocacy		
Parent involvement and education opportunities responsive to the needs expressed by families		
Parent involvement in curriculum development		
Opportunities for families of children with disabilities to recognize their role in advocating for their child		
Opportunities for parents to learn about rights and responsibilities concerning the education of the child in the school they attend after Head Start		
Opportunities for pregnant women participating in EHS to improve their skills and knowledge in prenatal education on fetal development, labor and delivery and post-partum recovery		

Interview:

The self-assessment team should attempt to speak with as many program managers as possible, asking each manager how he/she promotes parent involvement in the service areas they manage. Another strategy you may use is to check in with the other self-assessment teams charged with reviewing child development, health, nutrition, education, mental health, disabilities, and

transition services. You can ask for their assistance in assessing the extent to which parent involvement is an integral part of each of these service areas.

As part of your assessment, interview some families, teachers, and members of the family services staff: Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

Questions for each content area specialist (manager):

In what ways are parents, including fathers, involved in services for children in the content area that you manage? (Answers should address home visits, health care, curriculum development, nutrition services, and disabilities services, transition to/from Head Start).

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe current practices which ensure that parents have a strong voice in planning for the transition of their child into Head Start from Early Head Start or other child care/development arrangements or from Head Start into elementary school.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do parents find out about the different ways they can get involved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the program ensure that parents have opportunities for community advocacy so they can influence services in this community? Can you give me a few examples of community advocacy efforts being supported by this program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the program ensure that opportunities for involvement are responsive to the needs and interests of individual parents (e.g., parents with disabilities, parents whose primary language is not English, working parents, homebound parents, incarcerated parents, non-custodial parents, grandparents, etc.)?

_____

_____

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_____

What procedure do you follow if parents refuse health care services offered through Head Start?

_____

_____

_____

What procedure do you follow if parents choose not to follow-up with recommended treatment or services proposed by the Head Start program (e.g., mental health, health, Individual Education Plan (IEP))?

_____

_____

Questions for staff working directly with families:

What are some of the different opportunities (e.g., learning, community involvement, etc.) that this program offers families?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe your role in connecting families to these different opportunities.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for Families:

Tell me how you found about some of the various opportunities that Head Start offers to families. Can you name some of them?

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_____

_____

_____

How have you chosen to be involved in Head Start and how has the program benefited your family?

_____

_____

Have you participated in an end of the year staff-parent meeting to understand the progress your child has made while in Head Start? Did it better prepare you to advocate for your child in public school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you know what to do if you have a complaint?

_____

_____

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_____

Other Parent Involvement Considerations

The following questions are borrowed from the *Father-Friendliness Organizational Self-Assessment and Planning Tool* developed by the National Head Start Association and the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership.

Ask the parent involvement coordinator the following questions:

Have you conducted any kind of assessment to determine the "father-friendliness" of your program? Did your assessment look at organizational philosophy, staff attitudes, program services, policies and procedures?

❑ Yes ❑ No Comment_____

Does your program have a specific initiative aimed at involving or serving fathers or other male role models?

❑ Yes ❑ No Comment_____

Is contact information systematically taken on the father of children regardless of the father's marital status or living arrangements?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Are fathers included in family needs assessment and goal setting?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Is the message given to both fathers and mothers that the role of fathers as active parents is important to their child's development?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Are fathers included in services such as parenting classes? Are fathers referred to other community resources such as GED, ESL or job training?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

When fathers are present (e.g., dropping off a child at the classroom) are they welcomed and encouraged by staff to observe or join in activities? Do staff interact with fathers in a style that demonstrates respect, empathy and high expectations?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Are fathers or other male role models who are active and involved in the program used to reach and recruit others?

❏ Yes ❏ No Comment_____

Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

_____

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_____

Summary of Results for Parent Involvement

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

_____

_____

_____

Additional areas of concern:

_____

_____

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❺

Family and Community Partnerships: Community and Child Care Partnerships

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee take an active role in community planning and advocacy to improve the delivery of services to children and families? Is this program engaged in effective childcare partnerships?

Purpose:

The objective is to ensure that programs collaborate with partners in their communities in order to provide the highest level of services to children and families, to foster a continuum of family centered services, and to advocate for a community that shares responsibility for the healthy development of children and families of all cultures. (Introduction to 1304.41, p. 147)

This booklet will help the team assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to developing and maintaining community and child care partnerships. Related performance standards include: 1304.23(b)(4); 1304.24(a)(3)(iv); 1304.40(e)(4); 1304.41; 1308.4(I)(1)-1308.41(l)(7); 1310.23

As you conduct your assessment of this program's approach to community partnerships and child care partnerships, pay close attention to:

- How the program goes about developing a plan to guide their partnership activity
- How partnership responsibilities are shared among the managers and staff
- The program's progress in formulating interagency agreements

Review:

The team leader should provide the self-assessment team members with copies of:

- Interagency agreements;
- Child care partnership agreements;

- The program's plan for community involvement;
- Documentation of the program's partnership efforts; and
- Copies of the program's transition plan.

Use the questions below to assist your document review:

Does the program document their community partnership efforts?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Is there an interagency agreement with local education agencies?

❏ Yes ❏ No

If no interagency agreement exists, is there documentation of efforts to establish such an agreement?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Is there evidence that the program has on-going collaborative relationships with the following community agencies?	Yes	No
Health care providers		
Mental health providers		
Nutritional service providers		
Providers of services to children with disabilities		
Family preservation and support services		
Child protective services		
Local elementary schools		
Other educational and cultural institutions (libraries, museums, etc.)		
Providers of child care services		
Organizations and businesses that provide transportation services		
Other organizations and businesses that provide support and resources to mothers, fathers and families		

Are there procedures in place to facilitate transitions to/from other child care programs and Early Head Start or Head Start, and from Head Start to elementary school?

❏ Yes ❏ No   Comment_____

Interview:

Ask your team leader to assist you to connect with:

- Members of the management team who have primary responsibility for overseeing community partnerships;
- Community partners; and
- Childcare partners

When interviewing Head Start Managers, ask:

How does the program establish and maintain advisory committees to address program issues and to help the program respond to family and community needs?

_____

_____

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_____

How does the program coordinate services to children with disabilities and their families with community agencies?

_____

_____

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_____

Does the program have relationships with the following community agencies?:

Health care providers ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Mental health providers ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Nutritional service providers ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Providers of services to children with disabilities ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Family preservation and support services ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Child protective services ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Local elementary schools ❑ Yes ❑ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Other educational and cultural institutions (libraries, museums, etc.) ❏ Yes ❏ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Providers of child care services ❏ Yes ❏ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Organizations and businesses that provide transportation services

❏ Yes ❏ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

Other organizations and businesses that provide support and resources to families

❏ Yes ❏ No

Describe the benefits to children and families:

_____

How does the program encourage volunteers to participate in Head Start?

_____

_____

_____

Early Head Start only:

How does the program promote the access of children, families and expectant parents to community services that are responsive to their needs?

_____

_____

Can you provide examples of how Head Start parents work with staff to improve the quality of services available to children and families?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have practices in place to coordinate services between this program and other programs that children attend before, after, and during their Head Start experience? Please describe.

_____

_____

_____

Do you coordinate joint training with early childhood programs in this community?

_____

_____

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Is there a group in your community working to coordinate transportation and do you participate on it? If none, have you explored the possibility of creating one?

_____

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Questions for Community Partners:

If possible, see if you can meet and speak with one or two of the program's community partners (all programs must engage in community partnerships). Four sample interview questions follow:

Could you briefly describe your agency and the service it provides to the community?

_____

_____

_____

How and why did your agency's partnership with Head Start develop?

_____

_____

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What activities and initiatives are underway as a result of this partnership?

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_____

What do you see as the major effects of this partnership?

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For members of the Health Services Advisory Committee or other Head Start Advisory Committees: How long have you been a member of the Health services Advisory Committee? What sort of issues has the committee addressed during that time?

_____

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For Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or early intervention programs funded by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C agencies): How do you work with Head Start to support children with disabilities? What arrangements do you have to assist children and families in their transition from Head Start?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If possible, see if you can meet and speak with the program's *childcare partner* (not every program engages in childcare partnerships). Sample interview questions include:

Tell me a little about your partnership with Head Start -- how it began and how it is working.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does your partnership with Head Start assist in meeting the needs of children and families in this community?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What do you bring to the partnership? What does Head Start bring?

_____

_____

_____

How was the division of responsibilities decided? Is there a written agreement?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How is information shared between agencies? What records are shared? How do you handle confidentiality?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you ensure that you are meeting all of the Head Start performance standards? What kinds of oversight and training does Head Start provide?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other Community Partnership Considerations

Interview:

Ask members of the management team who have primary responsibility for overseeing community partnerships the following questions:

Do you partner with faith-based organizations in your community? Describe the nature of any partnership you may have developed.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

_____

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Summary of Results for Community and Child Care Partnerships

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❻

Program Design: Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee approach eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance in an attempt to meet the needs of Head Start-eligible families and in response to the community assessment?

Purpose:

The purpose is to ensure that the program is abiding by federal requirements and procedures for determining recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance of children.

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance. Related performance standards include: 1305.3-1305.8; 1308.5

As you conduct your assessment of the program's approach to eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance pay close attention to:
- How the program determines who in their community is most in need of Head Start services
- The strategies used to recruit children and families who are most in need
- The process used to select children for the program
- How the program ensures full enrollment
- How the program responds to children who are absent

Review:

Ask your team leader to make the following documents available to you for review:
- Community assessment;
- Eligibility and selection criteria;
- Written information on the recruitment process and the recruitment areas;

- Current waiting list of eligible children (Caution: in order to maintain confidentiality, only staff persons serving on your assessment team are able to view this information);
- Attendance records; and
- Class lists and home visitor assignments.

Use the questions below to assist your document review:

Does the community assessment include the following information about the Early Head Start or Head Start geographic area:	Yes	No
Demographic makeup of eligible children (number, where they live, race ethnicity)		
Community strengths and assets		
Other child care and child development programs that are serving Head Start-eligible children (include publicly funded programs)?		
Estimated number of children with disabilities (birth to 4 years old), including types and relevant services available		
Data regarding the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of Head Start-eligible children and their families		
The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of Head Start eligible Children and their families as defined by Head Start families and by institutions in the community that serve young children		
Resources in the community that could be used to address the needs of Head Start eligible Children and families, including an assessment of their availability and accessibility		
Summary and analysis of the data collected for the community assessment		

Is there evidence that the program uses the information from the community assessment to determine the following:

A plan for recruiting eligible families   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Determining selection criteria   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Are there procedures for selecting children based on:

Family income   ❏ Yes ❏ No

Age of the child   ❏ Yes ❏ No

The extent to which a child or family meets
program-specific selection criteria?   ❏ Yes ❏ No

If a vacancy occurs more than 60 days before the end of the program year, is it filled with another child within 30 days?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Does the program regularly calculate average daily attendance? Does the program analyze the causes for absenteeism when the monthly average daily attendance falls below 85%?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Is there a waiting list that ranks children according to selection criteria?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

In cases where children have four or more unexcused absences, has the program documented its attempt to intervene with family support procedures?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment_____

Interview:

One or two members of the self-assessment team should interview a number of Head Start families as well as staff persons responsible for the recruitment, selection, and enrollment of Head Start families. In many programs, this responsibility rests with the family services manager and his/her staff.

Questions for families:

How did you find out about Head Start and what was it like for you to get into the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Questions for staff:

How do families in your community find out about Head Start?
(See if the program uses a variety of strategies to reach out to families; see if the program staff is willing to assist families through the application process)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Tell me how a decision is made to accept a particular child into the program.
(Listen to be sure that there are established criteria used to evaluate applications and that a consistent process is used to make decisions.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is the current average daily attendance of your program? What are doing to address the low attendance if it is below 85%

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the program recruit those most in need of Head Start services, including previously underserved populations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are at least 90% of your currently enrolled families living below the poverty guideline?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does your program ensure that at least 10% of those served are children with disabilities? What is your progress in meeting this goal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you assign children to program options offered by your program? (Listen to be sure that options are offered to families in accordance with their needs)

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is your funded enrollment for children? How many children are currently in the program? How do you maintain the funded enrollment level, fill vacancies as they occur?

_____

_____

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_____

Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

_____

_____

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_____

Summary of Results for Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance

Areas where the program is working well .Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❼

Program Design: Facilities, Materials, Equipment, and Transportation

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

How does the grantee ensure that the facilities, materials, equipment and transportation services are supportive of learning and reflective of different ages and stages of development of each child including children with disabilities, and that appropriate space is provided for the conduct of all program activities?

The objective is to ensure that Head Start's physical environment supports the delivery of high quality services to all children and families.   This booklet will help the self-assessment team to determine if the program meets Federal performance standards relating to facilities, materials and equipment. Related performance standards include: 1304.21(a)(4)(iv); 1304.21(a)(5)-1304.21(a)(6); 1304.22(e)(7); 1304.23(e); 1304.53(a)(1)-1304.53(a)(5); 1304.53(a)(7)-(9); 1304.53(a)(10)(iv); 1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)-1304.53(a)(10)(xv); 1304.53(a)(10)(xvii); 1304.53(b); 1306.30(c); 1308.4(o)(4)-1308.4(o)(6); 1310.10; 1310.12(b); 13.10.13-1310.15(b); 1310.15(d); 1310.20; 1310.22(b); 1310.23; 45 CFR 84.5

As you conduct your assessment of the program's facilities, materials, and equipment, pay close attention to:

- How inspections, maintenance, and repairs are carried out; and
- How the need for materials and equipment is determined and how they are ordered;
- How programs comply with all relevant Federal, state, and local requirements regarding facilities and transportation vehicles.

Review:

Ask your team leader to make the following licenses and inspections available to you for review:

- Child care;
- Sanitation;
- Fire/safety;
- Food handlers;
- Other locally required licenses; and
- Vehicle maintenance logs.

In addition, ask your team leader to provide you with copies of the following policies and procedures and check the appropriate box:

	Available and Current	Not available	Does not apply - Explain
Medication administration			
Short-term exclusion for health reasons			
Emergency procedures			
Child abuse/neglect reporting procedures			
Equipment and vehicle maintenance logs			

Observe:

The self-assessment team member should visit a number of centers and classrooms (include family childcare homes) and complete the attached Health and Safety Checklist and the Bus Ride Checklist. Share your results with the team administering the booklet on Prevention and Early Intervention. The checklist results will also assist them in their work.

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview management staff responsible for facilities and materials. Often the management team includes the director and education manager. Use the questions below to assist you with interviews:

How do you make sure that the program's facilities, materials, equipment, and transportation services are appropriate for the children you serve?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you make sure that the program's facilities, materials, equipment and transportation services are appropriate for children with disabilities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

When choosing a facility, what things do you consider?

_____

_____

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_____

How do you ensure that the facilities, materials and equipment are accessible and useful to persons with disabilities?

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_____

_____

_____

Besides classroom space, what are the other uses for space in your Head Start facilities?

_____

_____

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_____

How do you ensure that arrangements and space, as well as types and uses of materials and equipment support the curriculum?

_____

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_____

How do you ensure that facilities are free of toxins such as smoke, lead, pesticides and herbicides?

_____

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_____

How do you ensure that required inspections, maintenance and repairs are taking place and the facility is in compliance with all other relevant Federal, state, tribal and local requirements?

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Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

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Summary of Results for Facilities, Materials, Equipment, and Transportation

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

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Areas where the program needs improvement:

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Additional areas of concern:

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Health and Safety Checklist

Place a check in the box when you observe evidence of each of the items listed. Describe any problems or concerns you witness in the comment section.

Note: duplicate this page if your team is assessing more than four classrooms.

For Early Head Start Infant/Toddler classrooms only:

		Classrooms		
1. Sanitation and hygiene procedures for diapering have been adopted that adequately protect health and safety of children served by the program and staff. [1304.22(e)(5)]				
2. The diaper-changing area is located away from areas used for cooking, eating, or children's activities. [1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)]				
3. Diapers are disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner. [1304.53(a)(10)(xvi)]				
4. Infant sleeping arrangements use firm mattresses and avoid soft bedding materials such as comforters, pillows, fluffy blankets or stuffed toys. [1304.53(b)(3)]				
5. Cribs are at least three feet apart from each other. [1304.22(e)(7)]				
6. Infant toys are made of non-toxic materials and are sanitized regularly. [1304.53(b)(2)]				
7. Toilet training equipment is available for children being toilet trained. [1304.53(a)(10)(xv)]				

All Classrooms

1. Nonporous gloves are available for use when dealing with bloody bodily fluids. [1304.22(e)(3)]				
2. Staff promote effective dental hygiene among children in conjunction with meals. [1304.23(b)(3)]				
3. Toys are stored in a "safe and orderly fashion" (e.g., in their assigned places not out where people can trip over them). [1304.53(b)(1)(vii)]				
4. The indoor and outdoor space for infants and toddlers is separated from general walkways and areas used by preschoolers. [[1304.53(a)(4)]				

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Classrooms				
5. Toys, materials and furniture are safe, durable, and kept in good condition (e.g., materials free of sharp edges and loose pieces. Cribs are at least three feet apart from each other.) [1304.22(e)(7)]				
6. Center space is organized into functional areas that can be recognized by children and that allow for individual activities and social interactions. [1304.53(a)(3)]				
7. Staffing patterns support regulations regarding class size and number of adults per class. [1306.20]				
8. Staff, volunteers and children wash their hands with soap and running water after diapering or toilet use; before food-related activities; whenever hands are contaminated with blood or other bodily fluids; after handling pets or other animals, before and after giving medications, before and after treating or bandaging a wound, and after assisting a child with toilet use. [1304.22(e)(1)-(2)]				

Comments:

Early Head Start Only: Indoor Facilities

1. Facilities are available for the proper storage and handling of breast milk and formula. [1304.23(e)(2)]				
2. Bathroom facilities are clean, in good repair, and easily reached by children [1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)]				
3. Bathroom facilities are separated from areas used for cooking, eating or children's activities. [1304.53(a)(10)(xiv)]				
4. Indoor and outdoor premises are cleaned daily and kept free of undesirable and hazardous materials and conditions. [1304.53(a)(10)(viii)]				
5. Garbage and trash are stored and disposed of in a safe, sanitary manner. [1304.53(a)(10)(xvi)]				
6. A separate utility sink is specifically used to clean potties. [1304.22(e)(6)]				
7. For EHS, cribs are spaced at least three feet apart. [1304.22(e)(7)]				
8. Accommodations for nursing mothers who visit classrooms/participate in activities. [1304.40(c)(3)]				

Safety

|					
1. The facility has approved working fire extinguishers, and an appropriate number of smoke detectors that are tested regularly. [1304.53(a)(10)(v); 1304.53(a)(10)(vi)]					
2. Windows and glass doors are constructed, adapted or adjusted to prevent injury to children. [1304.53(a)(10)(xii)]					
3. Electrical outlets accessible to children are covered. [1304.53(a)(10)(xi)]					
4. The heating/cooling system is insulated to protect children and staff from potential burns. [1304.53(a)(10)(i)]					
5. There is an absence of highly flammable furnishings, decorations, or materials that emit toxic fumes. [1304.53(a)(10)(ii)]					
6. Flammable and other dangerous materials/poisons are stored in locked cabinets or facilities separate from medications and food and accessible only to authorized persons. [1304.53(a)(10)(iii)]					
7. Appropriate licenses (water/sewage, food/sanitation, fire codes, transportation, and vendor/contractor licenses) are seen [1304.53(a)(6) and (10)(xii), 1304.23(e)(1), 1306.30(c)]					

Comments:

Indoor Facilities (Continued)

Facility Layout and Environment

1. If necessary, there is a safe and effective heating and cooling system. [1304.53(a)(10)(i)]					
2. There is at least 35 sq. ft of usable space (i.e., not including bathrooms, halls, kitchens, staff rooms, and storage places) indoor space per child. [1304.53(a)(5)]					
3. Facilities enable the safe and effective participation of children with disabilities. [1308.4(o)(4)]					
4. Rooms are well lit. [1304.53(a)(10)(iv)]					
5. Garbage and trash are stored and disposed of in a safe, sanitary manner. [1304.53(a)(10)(xvi)]					

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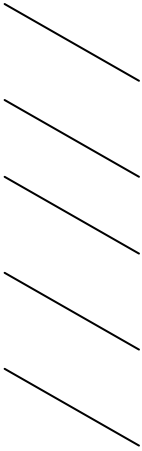
Provision for Emergencies

1. Exits and/or evacuation routes are clearly marked. [1304.22(a)(3)]					
2. Emergency lighting is available. [1304.53(a)(10)(iv)]					
3. Emergency telephone numbers (e.g., EMS, Fire, Police, Poison Control) are clearly posted. [1304.22(a)(2)]					
4. Policies and plans of action that require rapid response for emergencies on the part of staff (e.g., a child choking) or immediate medical or dental attention are clearly posted. [1304.22(a)(1)]					
5. A well-supplied first-aid kit is available, accessible to staff, and out of reach of children. [1304.22(f)(1)]					

Medication Administration

1. All medications are properly labeled (i.e., name of child/staff, name of medication, dosage, name/number of pharmacy/physician). [1304.22(c)(1)]					
2. Medications are under lock and key and out of reach of children. [1304.53(a)(10)(iii), 1304.22(c)(1)]					
3. Medications in need of refrigeration are refrigerated. [1304.22(c)(1)]					

OUTDOORS

1. There is at least 75 sq. ft of usable outdoor space per child. [1304.53(a)(5)]					
2. The playground equipment is in good repair and safe condition (e.g., adequately secured to the ground, free of sharp edges and/or splinters, soft falling surface). [1304.53(a)(7); 1304.53(a)(10)(viii); 1304.53(a)(10)(x)]					
3. The outdoor play area is arranged such that no child can leave the premises or get into unsafe or unsupervised areas. [1304.53(a)(9)]					

Comments:

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Bus Ride Checklist

Reviewer _____   Date/Time _____

Other Sources of Information Used_____

This form will help you to record your observations about the program's transportation of children. Each boldface heading on the left side of the page names a service area or system. Comments on the concept can be based on either observation or discussion with persons responsible for transportation for the program.

Note: duplicate this page if your team is assessing more than one bus.

Curriculum		
Yes	**No**	
		Children engage in positive social behaviors. [1304.21(a)(3)(I)(D)]
		Routines are timely, predictable, and unrushed. [1304.21(a)(3)(ii)]
		Adults use positive methods of child guidance (e.g., clear, consistent rules exist). [1304.52(h)(1)(iv)]

Comments:

Individualization and Disabilities Services		
Yes	No	
		Adults support children's varying styles of communication. [1304.21(a)(4)(iii), 1304.21(b)(2)(ii]
		The environment supports and respects all children and families. [1304.21(a)(1)(iii), 1304.21(h)(1)(i)]
		Parent interactions are respectful of each family's background. [1304.40(a)(5)]
		Transportation equipment is accessible to children with disabilities. [1304(o)(5), 1310.22(b)]

Comments:

Prevention and Early Intervention

Yes	No	
		Up-to-date family contact information is available. [1304.22(a)(2)
		There is adequate storage of needed medication. [1304.22(c)]
		Procedures ensure that children are released to a parent, legal guardian, or other individual designated by the parent. [1304.52(g), 1306.32(a), 1310.10(g)

Comments:

Facilities, Materials, Equipment, and Transportation

Yes	No	
		Each vehicle purchased after 2/20/01 is a school bus or allowable alternate vehicle with age- and weight-appropriate restraint systems and a reverse beeper. [1310.12(b)]
		Each vehicle has a communication system to call for assistance, emergency safety equipment, a first-aid kit, and a seat belt cutter. [1310.10(e)]
		Any auxiliary seating is manufacture installed. [1310.10(e)]
		The bus/allowable alternate vehicle is in safe operating condition, and there are procedures in place to ensure that it continues in working order (e.g., an annual safety inspection, regular maintenance checks, and a daily pre-trip inspection). [1304.53(a)(7), 1310.13]
		All children and adults are seated in age- and weight-appropriate restraint systems while the vehicle is in motion. [1310.15(a) & (d)]
		Baggage is properly stored and secured, aisles remain clear, and doors and emergency exits are unobstructed. [1310.15(b)]
		Trip length is minimized as much as possible [1310.20(b)(1)]
		Number of occupants does not exceed maximum passenger capacity. [1310.20(b)(2)]
		Trip routing minimizes "U" turns; trip stops minimize traffic disruptions; when possible, children do not need to cross streets; and in case of need, children are escorted across the street by an adult. [1310.20(b)(3)-(6)]
		There are specific procedures for use of alternate routes in case of hazardous conditions. [1310.20(b)(7)]

Comments:

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Communication		
Yes	**No**	
		Each vehicle is equipped with a two-way communication device. [1310.10(e)]
		Communication is conducted in the parent's primary or preferred language, if possible. [1304.51(c)(2)]
		Effective two-way communication between staff and parents is facilitated. [1304.51(c)(1), 1304.40]
		Interactions with parents help establish trust and ensure the provision of necessary services and supports. [1304.40(a)(1)]

Comments:

Human Resources

Yes	No	
		The driver has a valid CDL license and has been trained to operate the vehicle safely and efficiently, run a fixed route, administer basic first aid, handle emergency situations, operate any special equipment like chair lifts, conduct routine maintenance and safety checks and maintain records. [1304.22(a), 1310.16(a), 1310.17(b)]
		The bus monitor is trained in child boarding and exiting procedures, use of child restraint systems, responses to emergencies, use of special equipment, and pre- and post-trip vehicle checks. [1304.52(g), 1304.52(h)(1), 1306.32(a), 1310.17(f)(2)]

Comments:

Program Self-Assessment Booklet ❶❽

Using Child Outcomes in Program Self-Assessment

Core Question to guide the self-assessment team:

Does the program have an effective system for measuring child outcomes that informs program leaders of patterns of progress for three to five year old children and how the program might be improved?

Purpose:

The purpose is to ensure that programs have a system for measuring child outcomes and using the results to plan for continuous program improvements.

This booklet will help the self-assessment team determine if the program has responded to legislative changes concerning program outcomes as outlined in the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 1998 and related guidance that appears in ACYF-IM-HS-00-03 and ACYF-IM-00-18.

Note: The team leader should make the following documents available to team members assessing this area:

- Sec. 641A(b) of the Head Start Act (as amended October 27, 1998) entitled RESULTS-BASED PERFORMANCE MEASURES
- Copy of ACYF-IM-HS-00-18, Using Child Outcomes in Program Self-Assessment including:
    - Attachment A: Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
    - Attachment B: Timelines for Implementation and Program Monitoring

As you conduct your assessment of the program's outcome measurement system, pay close attention to the:

I.   Effectiveness of the system in demonstrating patterns of progress for three to five year old children participating in the program.
II. Actual results of the program's analysis of information on child outcomes

I.   Effectiveness of the System for Measuring and Analyzing Child Outcome Data

Review:

The self-assessment team member should review:

- Child assessment instruments
- Written plans that have been revised to include information on measuring child outcomes
- Written procedures describing methods for data collection, data analysis, and how child outcome information will be used in program planning
- Sample data collection reports
- Report of data analysis

Use the checklist below to guide your document review:

Do child assessment procedures and the instruments used by the program address, at a minimum, the eight domain areas and the required indicators listed in the Child Outcomes Framework?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Do written plans reflect responsibilities associated with collecting and analyzing child outcome data?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Is there evidence that the program staff measure children's progress at a minimum, in the beginning, middle, and end of the year?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Does the program have a system for recording the results of child outcome measurement so they can be analyzed effectively? Can the reports be used to identify patterns of progress for children?

❏ Yes ❏ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Interview:

The self-assessment team member should interview the Head Start director, the manager of child development services, and other program leaders involved in the child outcome measurement system.

Questions you may use to guide your interview:

Is the Head Start program management team fully aware of the requirement for assessing child outcomes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who has the responsibility for implementing the program's outcome measurement system?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Has the program developed a process to analyze outcome data across the program and to include that information in your continuous improvement process?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

Describe your system for collecting child outcome data. Is information gathered, at a minimum, at the beginning, middle, and end of the program year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is information gathered on all eight domains and thirteen mandatory elements and indicators?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

Does the program have written procedures for engaging in child outcome measurement?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

Are you including children with disabilities in your process?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

Do you include all children in your process?

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

Is your program measuring outcomes in areas other than those that are mandated (e.g., family outcomes)? Describe which ones.

❑ Yes ❑ No   Comment: _____

What process is used by program managers and leaders to analyze data collected during outcome measurement?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you initiated any program improvements as a result of any discoveries you made while collecting and analyzing information on child outcomes? What are they?

_____

_____

_____

_____

II.   Using Child Outcomes in Program Self-Assessment

What conclusions and results have you drawn from your analysis of child outcome information?

Instructions: Attach or record the results of the program's data analysis below. Include this information with your summary so that the self-assessment leadership team can use this information in planning program improvements.

Additional observations, document reviews, or interview questions that this team may choose to add:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Summary of Results for Using Child Outcomes in Program Self-Assessment

Areas where the program is doing well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds performance standards:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Areas where the program needs improvement:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Additional areas of concern:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Stage 3: Analyzing the Results of Your Self-Assessment

The Importance of Analyzing Findings

After completing Stage 2, *Engaging in Self-Assessment*, you will find that your self-assessment teams have generated a great deal of information and data. You will have booklets full of raw data in the form of survey results, interview responses, and notes reflecting the results of observations. Participants in the assessment process will have summarized each booklet so that leaders are able to glean indicators of key strengths and weaknesses from the results. It is up to the leadership team to process and analyze this data to capture the important messages that it will provide. These messages will drive the program's improvement efforts.

In this stage, the self-assessment leadership team analyzes the results of the self-assessment. Provide each member with a packet of information that includes a summary of each booklet. Your Stage 2 team leaders can help prepare these summaries to ensure that they are succinct, user-friendly, and accurately reflect the work of team members. Be sure that the final summaries clearly distinguish between findings that are pervasive throughout the program and those that are limited to a certain segment, option, or a specific site within the program. In addition to preparing and distributing written summaries, the Stage 2 team leaders can also provide the leadership team with verbal reports that outline the key strengths and weaknesses discovered during their assessment activity.

Analyzing information is a sophisticated skill. The problems that are initially identified by participants and team leaders may only be symptoms of a larger, more systemic issue, just as a cough may be a symptom of a more serious infection. It is important to analyze the cause behind the symptom. This process will move the program closer to implementing long-term solutions.

Consider the following example:

> A self-assessment team uncovers a lack of documented follow-up in children/family health files. During the presentation of summary reports, the leadership team notes that this was evidenced in both health services and disabilities services. As program leaders analyze and discuss the potential causes of the problem, they consider questions such as:
>
> - Are staff aware of their responsibility to connect children and families with follow-up services? Is this related to staff training?
> - Are follow-up services actually occurring but not being documented due to flaws in the documentation system?
> - Is it a resource question? Is there enough staff or time allotted in staff schedules to perform this function?
> - Why weren't managers aware of this problem so that it could have been corrected sooner? Is there a breakdown in ongoing monitoring systems?

Evidence of similar problems in several service areas may point to issues in a crosscutting management system such as communication, ongoing monitoring or supervision and training (human resources). Your program's management systems exist to support program services. A breakdown in a key management system will most likely result in negative effects across various program areas.

Self-assessment leaders may need to build skills for analyzing data. Although this toolkit does not include skill-building components, there are Head Start resources available to complement this toolkit. One resource is *Head Start Moving Ahead: Module 7A – Improving Quality Through Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment*, which is available through Head Start publications.

Responding to Immediate Needs, Establishing Short-Term Improvement Plans, and Identifying Goals for Program Improvement

As program leaders analyze the self-assessment findings, they will begin to identify areas that require program improvement. Leaders will want to develop plans to respond to three types of concerns.

Health and Safety. Health and safety of children, families, and staff is the primary concern of the leadership team. The team must first determine if all health and safety issues identified during Stage 2 have been rectified. They will want to develop a plan to immediately resolve any remaining health and safety issues.

Short-Term Improvements. Other short-term action plans will address isolated service area issues that managers can address quickly (usually within 90 days) and with little investment of resources.

Major Program Improvement. Team members will also want to formulate goals that respond to the major areas of concern that emerged from the analysis of their self-assessment data. Some of these goals will address systemic issues in the program. To address these issues, managers may need to develop a plan of action that takes time and significant shifts in program resources.

Wise leaders compare the results of the most recent Federal monitoring to the program's self-assessment findings. If monitoring issues have not yet been resolved, leaders develop or modify previously established goals (such as those in a Quality Improvement Plan) to ensure that steps are in place to correct deficiencies or issues in service delivery systems.

Frequently, a team will need to prioritize multiple program improvement goals to ensure that it doesn't jeopardize its chance of success by spreading resources too thinly. As the team begins the prioritization process, it may wish to revisit the core objectives of Head Start found at the beginning of this toolkit:

- Enhance children's growth and development
- Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
- Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services

- Link children and families to needed community services
- Ensure well-managed programs that involve parents in decision-making*

*ACYF-IM-HS-00-03, Initial Guidance on New Legislative Provisions on Performance Standards, Performance Measures, Program Self-Assessment and Program Monitoring, issued 1/31/2000

Program managers will want to place goals that address a program's ability to meet these core objectives at the top of their list. Goals that address weaknesses in management systems or service areas also deserve top priority. For example, Head Start experts would rate goals that address the following issues as top priorities:

- Lack of an active Policy Council
- Child safety
- Significant under enrollment
- Lack of mental health services
- Reporting systems for suspected child abuse and neglect

The leadership team can use the attached workbook to document the results of their Stage 3 Analysis. Once completed, the contents of the workbook can be used as the basis for sharing information with others.

Sharing Information

Creating a climate that supports continuous program improvement and change is critical to the success of program improvement efforts. The leadership team should make plans to share the results of their analysis with all interested parties. Leaders should engage other program leaders, key informants, consumers of services, and direct service staff in discussions on how the program can be improved. These discussions will not only build a cadre of partners who can provide support and assistance in implementing change, but can provide leaders with additional ideas and innovative strategies that can be incorporated into the final program improvement plan.

The leadership team will design specific plans for program improvement in the final stage of the self-assessment process, Stage 4: *Strengthening Your Program*.

Stage 3 Workbook
Analyzing the Results of Your Self-Assessment

Are there any outstanding findings that need to be resolved immediately for the protection of the health and safety of children, staff or families?

FINDING	KEY PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	FOLLOW-UP DATE

What are the key strengths of your program that have been identified by your self-assessment teams?

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Which of the findings can be resolved through short-term corrective action?

SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE

Based on your analysis, what are the goals for program improvement? List the
program improvement goals in order of priority.

GOALS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Sharing the Results of Self-Assessment

AUDIENCE	PRESENTER(S)	MEETING DATE

Stage 4: Strengthening Your Program

Developing Plans for Program Improvement

Now it is time to revisit the goals for program improvement with members of the leadership team and make concrete plans that will move the program forward in its quality improvement efforts. Leadership team members may choose to use the attached action plan worksheet or use a format more familiar to the program for this purpose. The entire team may want to begin this process by identifying all of the available resources both within and outside of the program that can be applied to their plan.

Identifying Resources

Outside resources are critical to providing program managers and other program leaders with new information and renewed inspiration to "think out of the box" and explore new solutions to old and recurring problems. Outside resources could include:

- Consultation with Regional Office Head Start Specialist
- Consultation with neighboring Head Start programs that have demonstrated success in your area of focus
- Technical assistance services from the Regional Head Start Quality Improvement Center and Disabilities Services Quality Improvement Center to design new systems
- Workshops, conferences, and seminar series to gain new information to share with staff
- Academic Institutes and courses to enhance qualifications and competencies of staff

Think of the assets that surround you that may be applied to your change effort. Technical assistance and training can be provided by many different sources including:

- Other professionals within the grantee agency
- Board members, Policy Council parents and community representatives, and members of your various advisory groups who hold expertise in a variety of different areas
- Peers in other Head Start programs
- Community partners

If you are seeking clarification on federal policy or performance standards, you will want to contact your Federal Head Start Specialist in the Regional Office.

Engage members of the team in a brainstorming activity to generate a complete list of resources that can be incorporated into your plan for strengthening the program. Record their responses in the Stage 4 Workbook that is attached.

Designing Specific Plans for Improvement

Once you have determined which of the priority goals are to be included in your improvement effort, your next step is to involve team members in designing action plans that will serve as your roadmap for change. Your action plan may involve making changes in policy, procedures, or operations. Change also may entail a redirection of resources within the program such as reassigning staff or moving funds to a higher priority goal.

Think about the ideas that were generated by program leaders, staff, and the greater Head Start community when you shared the self-assessment results with them. Which of these ideas do you want to incorporate into your plans for improvement? In addition, ask one another how the program can build upon its existing strengths.

You may want to divide your leadership team into small groups, assigning members to work on one or two goals most aligned with their area of interest and expertise. Provide each team with copies of the action plan worksheet. The attached sample provides space for team members to identify:

- Action steps
- Person(s) responsible
- Resources that will be applied to the effort, and
- Expected dates of completion

Team members should use the area at the bottom of the form to identify the outcomes that the program hopes to achieve as a result of their efforts in each of the goal areas. By identifying anticipated outcomes, team members have the opportunity to discuss and revisit the important connection between program change and improved services and outcomes for children and families.

Evaluating Progress

It is important to identify a process and timeline for evaluating progress in implementing the program improvement plan. During follow-up reviews it is important to ask:

- Have we completed the action steps as outlined in the plan? If not, why not?
- What barriers have we faced in implementing change? How can they be overcome?
- Are we making progress towards reaching our goal?
- Are we likely to attain our anticipated outcome at our present rate of progress?

By conducting routine follow-ups, the team can identify potential barriers to change and make necessary adjustments to the original plan. You may discover during a follow-up review that you need to institute new strategies and action steps to achieve your intended outcome or that you want to apply new and different resources to the plan.

Stage 4 Workbook
Strengthening Your Program

Identifying Resources

The following are examples of resources available to our Head Start program to assist us in our program improvement efforts. These resources may be incorporated, as needed, into the action plans we develop for each of our goal areas. Resources include:

Resources	Comments

Action Plan Worksheet

GOAL:

ACTION STEP	PERSON(s) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	DATES

OUTCOMES: *(To assist you in identifying anticipated outcomes, complete the following statements…As a result of completing the above plan, our program will… OR As a result of completing the above plan, children and/or families will…)*

• • • •

Informing the Regional Office

The Head Start Regional Office views self-assessment as a critical evaluation tool. Strong, well-managed Head Start programs conduct regular self-assessments and use the results to guide continuous program improvement efforts. The Regional Office requests that programs provide an annual summary of their self-assessment and plans for improvement. The information you provide will help demonstrate your internal capacity to identify areas of concern and initiate improvement efforts on an on-going basis. We have provided you with a Regional Office Summary Report on the following page that can be used for this purpose.

Program Self-Assessment Results
Regional Office Summary Report
Program Year 20___

Program Name:_____

Dates of Self-Assessment:_____

Participants in the Self-Assessment Process (rather than individual names, provide stakeholders such as staff, parents, Policy Council, Board, community partners that were included in the process):

Program strengths identified:

Strength	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Other	

Goal areas for program improvement:

Area for Improvement	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Other	

Training and technical assistance resources that will be applied to improvement efforts:

_____   _____

Head Start Director   Date   **Policy Council Chair   Date**

Improving Your Self-Assessment System

Before adjourning your self-assessment leadership team, solicit their assistance in evaluating the entire self-assessment process. The feedback they provide will give you valuable information that can be used to refine and improve the process for subsequent years. Look for ideas and suggestions that will lead to the collection of information and data that is both reliable and invaluable to the program. The following questions can help you in that assessment:

Think about the process that you recently used to conduct your self-assessment. What worked well for team members, staff, parents, etc.?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What aspects of the self-assessment did not work well?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Were there enough participants so that the team was inclusive and able to spread the work out appropriately?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Was the timeframe allowed adequate for team members to complete their work? Did the timeframe cause undue interruptions for staff or others that had to be responsive to the self-assessment team's need for information?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What would you do differently next year? Make specific recommendations that can be considered for next year's self-assessment.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____